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“Our National Hearthstone”: Anti-Polygamy Fiction and the Sentimental Campaign Against Moral Diversity in Antebellum America

Sarah Barringer Gordon*

Margaret Wilde died a lingering and pathetic death in Utah, far from her loving family and her native New England soil. She was killed by her husband's polygamy, her will to live sapped by the barbarism of a bizarre new cult. Margaret's husband Richard “dared

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to trample the heart of a woman under his foot."¹ Lured by promises of wealth and power to convert to Mormonism and to emigrate to Utah with his young bride, he succumbed to the temptations of polygamy after only two years in the territory.² Making the betrayal even more poignant, the other woman in the story was Sarah Irving, Margaret's childhood friend. The dark, tempestuous Sarah had hoped to be Richard's first choice; she assuaged her conscience with pamphlets by free-love advocates who argued that monogamy was contrary to man's primitive nature. She followed the Wildes to Utah, and there seduced Richard. When told of Richard's perfidy, Margaret developed a fatal brain fever.

On her deathbed, Margaret blessed and forgave her killers, requesting only that Richard remain true to Sarah for the rest of their lives. Sarah was willing, but Richard blanched. He had taken a third wife only that morning. Sarah, devastated as much by the death of her friend as by Richard's duplicity, immediately saw the error of her ways. She vowed on Margaret's grave to return to the East, and there to devote herself to anti-polygamy advocacy: "Always, always, my voice shall rise in defense of one love, constant through life, and faithful in death—one home—one father and mother for the children—one joy on earth—one hope in heaven."³

So ends Metta Victor's *Mormon Wives*, one of the earliest examples of anti-polygamy fiction, a genre that eventually saw publication of some 80 full-length novels by the early twentieth century. Although clearly embedded in the sentimental tradition, anti-polygamy fiction has escaped widespread scholarly notice, despite its ubiquity in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴ Contributors to the genre

1. Metta Victoria Fuller Victor, *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger Than Fiction* (New York, Derby & Jackson 1856), 226.

2. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, then as now, were commonly called "Mormons." Technically, Mormons in the territorial period practiced polygyny, or the marriage of several women to one man. Although polygamy is an umbrella term, embracing both polygyny and polyandry (the marriage of several men to one woman), Mormon plural marriage has commonly been called "polygamy." This Article follows the common practice in both cases.

3. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 316.

4. Only a few studies of anti-polygamy fiction have been published. The most recent include Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review* 22 (summer 1968): 243-60; Charles A. Cannon, "The Awesome Power of Sex: The Polemical Campaign Against Mormon Polygamy," *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (February 1974): 61-82; Karen Lynn, "Sensational Virtue: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Fiction and American Popular Taste," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Culture* 14 (fall 1981): 101-12; Gail Farr Casterline, "'In the Toils' or 'Onward for Zion': Images of Mormon Women, 1852-1890" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1974).

A broader study of the construction of Mormonism in fiction is underway, one portion of which has been recently published. Terryl Givens, "Caricature as Containment: Orientalism, Bondage, and the Construction of Mormon Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 18 (1995). Givens' central thesis, that Mormon "otherness" was

included Arthur Conan Doyle, whose first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, opened with a blood-curdling murder in London, culminating a long quest for revenge against Mormons who had captured the murderer's young fiancée for the seraglio of an elder.⁵ By the time Conan Doyle took up his pen in the 1880's, anti-Mormon fiction was a well-known literary genre in both the United States and England.⁶ In the mid-1850's, however, anti-polygamy fiction was a new phenomenon, the exclusive preserve of women authors, themselves a recent (and extremely profitable) addition to the repertoire of the publishing industry.

Metta Victor and her fellow anti-polygamist novelists in the 1850's invigorated and redirected anti-Mormonism. For a variety of reasons, anti-polygamist authors were an integral part of what might be termed the feminization of anti-Mormonism in the 1850's⁷—anti-Mormonism was redacted through anti-polygamy rhetoric; translated into a vehicle for exploring the relationship of marriage and moral diversity.⁸ Anti-polygamist authors employed sentimental strategies to popularize and problematize the vulnerability of women in marriage. They portrayed polygamous men in Utah as exploiting weaknesses in the legal structure. The existence of Mormon polygamy in Utah, anti-polygamists maintained, revealed the urgent need for active intervention, a mandate for the creation of legal boundaries that circumscribed, defined, and protected marriage against incursions from

constructed out of a need to distance the uncomfortable fact that Mormons were in fact as American as their opponents, is at best only partially true for anti-polygamy fiction. The novels studied here were effective precisely because they portrayed the "sameness" of Mormons—that is, they constructed a vision of heroines who suffered because their feelings were just like those of American women. At the same time, many anti-polygamists also maintained staunchly that Mormons were in fact foreign—their rank and file swelled by undesirable immigrants from the slums of Europe. See text accompanying notes 100 to 104 below.

5. Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (London, 1887).

6. Several fictional and non-fictional accounts of Mormonism were widely available in London in the 1880's. Michael W. Homer, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Spiritualism and 'New Religions,'" *Dialogue* 23 (spring 1990): 97-121, 101; Jack Tracy, *Conan Doyle and the Latter-Day Saints* (Bloomington, Ind.: Gaslight Press, 1978), 10-14. Michael Homer and Jack Tracy point out that Conan Doyle appears to have read one or more of these accounts.

7. The term "feminization" as used here does not mean that anti-Mormonism became the exclusive preserve of women (although many women participated in one or another phase of the anti-polygamy campaign over the next four decades). Rather, anti-Mormonism was reconfigured, reconstructed as a subset of anti-polygamy; the primary focus in other words, was shifted to the treatment of women in Mormonism.

8. Moral diversity, for purposes of this Article, should be understood as moral relativism across time, space, gender, or class. That is, Mormon polygamists claimed that, even though polygamy might be wrong for others, or in previous times, it was right for them. Anti-polygamists responded to the Mormons' argument for moral diversity in marriage with a complex set of arguments, one aspect of which—embodied in sentimental fiction in the 1850's—is the subject of this Article. For a more complete treatment of the array of anti-polygamy arguments against moral (and legal) relativism in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The 'Twin Relic of Barbarism': A Legal History of Anti-Polygamy in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1995).

without. As Victor put it, polygamy threatened "our national hearthstone," and undermined marriage in the rest of the country, "corrupting the very fount of virtue and purity," thus destroying the "*home* of liberty."⁹

The story of how this campaign for the legal protection of marriage got underway is in significant part related to how women authors in the 1850's perceived plural marriage and the narrative weapons they employed to combat it. These novels, it bears emphasizing at the outset, were not grounded in any desire to explore the possibility that polygamy might be anything other than a system of licentiousness masquerading as marriage. Put simply, the realities of life in territorial Utah, and the examination of moral difference in what we in the late twentieth century would consider a neutral or detached manner, would have been anathema to sentimental authors of the antebellum period (and, for that matter, throughout the nineteenth century). Theirs was not a genre that admitted the validity of contextual, situational, or regional ethics. As historians of Mormonism have quite correctly pointed out, mistakes of fact are rife in the portrait of polygamy that emerges from these novels.¹⁰ Without question, and despite claims to the contrary by the novelists themselves, these works contain imagined worlds, constructed from a collage of presumptions and predigested plotlines. This Article treats these envisioned worlds as meaningful, not for an inquiry into the merits of polygamy as it was practiced in territorial Utah,¹¹ but for an investigation of the contours of the sentimental vision that underlies the novels.

The central theme of anti-polygamy novels, the vortex around which all else turned, was marriage, the laws that defined it, and the central problem of its protection. The importance of marriage was delineated in the anti-polygamy campaign with an urgency and ultimately with a persuasiveness that reveals a profound concern with the imposition and maintenance of monogamy as an essential component of democracy, liberty, and stability. The story of anti-polygamy begins here, with women's skills as popular novelists coalescing with their deep concerns about Mormon polygamy. This Article studies these early novels in their broader social context,

9. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, vii-viii.

10. See texts cited in note 4 above and note 37 below.

11. Taking anti-polygamy fiction seriously, that is, treating these novels as worthy of scholarly study, should not be taken as endorsing, or even defending, the worldview of anti-polygamists (or, for that matter, of polygamists). Given the history of persecution of Mormons, and the role of anti-polygamy and anti-polygamists in such persecution, it is vital that historians (myself included) disaggregate the goal of scholarly inquiry from the politics of polygamy, a subject that remains a painful one for many Mormons.

connecting their stories of marriage gone awry to the traditions of sentimentalism and reform, and to advocacy for legal change. In this light, sentimentalism as a form of legal argumentation was not only deployed by lawyers in courtroom narratives, as several scholars have recently described,¹² but also as a persuasive means of revealing and critiquing dangerous gaps in the legal system.

Four novels, each written in the mid-1850's, were the nucleus of the first wave of anti-polygamy, the earliest works dedicated to probing the pain and politics of polygamy. Metta Victor's *Mormon Wives*, Maria Ward's *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience*,¹³ Orvilla Belisle's *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A History of Mormonism, from its Rise to the Present Time*,¹⁴ and Alfreda Eva Bell's *Boadicea, the Mormon Wife: Life Scenes in Utah*,¹⁵ cornerstones of the new anti-polygamy genre, all placed ordinary women in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, challenging them to suffer with sanctity on the one hand, and to reclaim authority over marriage, on the other. In their day, these novels of the 1850's were both entertaining and energizing. Marriage, in these novels, was both the single most important legal fact of women's lives (and, through women, of all of civilization) and a brittle, even frail, institution—exposed, as Metta Victor put it, to “chance and change.”¹⁶ The disintegration of marriages, and the destructive forces unleashed by disintegration, provided novelists with a dramatic means to articulate both a grievance with the permeability of the marital unit and a recipe for its legal reinforcement.

The mix was a heady one; it connected the crisis in marriage to mobility, instability, and the problems of moral diversity, encompassing related issues of federalism, migration, the politics of class, immigration, and westward expansion. Anti-polygamy novels also

12. For examples of recent works that connect the sentimental tradition to courtroom strategy and storytelling both before and after the Civil War, see Daniel Cohen, “The Prostitute and the Somnambulist: Rufus Choate and the Triumph of Romantic Advocacy,” in *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1674-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Robert Ferguson, “Story and Transcription in the Trial of John Brown,” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 6 (1994): 37-73; Laura Hanft Korobkin, “The Maintenance of Mutual Confidence: Sentimental Strategies at the Adultery Trial of Henry Ward Beecher,” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 7 (1995): 1-48; and Hendrik Hartog, “Lawyers, Husband's Rights, and Unwritten Law” (unpublished manuscript, 1995). This Article argues that anti-polygamy novels demonstrate that sentimentalism was a component of legal consciousness outside the courtroom in addition to having a role in litigation.

13. Maria Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience* (New York: J.C. Derby, 1855).

14. Orvilla Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A History of Mormonism, from its Rise to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: W.W. Smith, 1855).

15. Alfreda Eva Bell, *Boadicea, the Mormon Wife: Life Scenes in Utah* (Baltimore: Arthur R. Orton, 1855).

16. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 315.

explored the implications of religious voluntarism, anti-clericalism, domestic violence, child-rearing, and housekeeping. These issues were all part of the anti-polygamy package, tied to the distribution of power within the legal relationship called marriage and the call for moral uniformity across the country. Anti-polygamy novelists used stories about marriage, religion, and westward migration as their medium, prose as their primary means of persuasion. Novel-writing in this branch of the sentimental tradition was designed to arouse active sympathy, ultimately to inspire activism for legal change.¹⁷ These novelists used their story-telling art to save marriage from corruption and abuse.¹⁸

This concern with the fragility of marriage was highly gendered. The "national hearthstone" which Metta Victor helped to construct and champion, was a concept grounded in the call for legal structures to protect emotional homogeneity (the inherently monogamous "nature" shared by all women) as the cure for moral diversity—the protection of women as the solution to abuses of male power in a federal system. The subversive potential of this embrace of law as the salvation of marriage emerged from time to time into open air; much of the time, anti-polygamists cloaked their advocacy of legal reform in the comforting garb of "tradition." The success of the formula—the immersion of critique in an outer crust of traditionalism—is evident in the ready market for such tales of woman's suffering.

This Article explores the antebellum world of anti-polygamy sentimentalism. Part I of the Article begins with a brief explanation of the context in which early Mormons initiated and then expanded the practice of plural marriage. Part II of the Article moves on to a

17. On the connection between sympathy and legal change, see Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 463.

18. The plots, the characters, and the narrators' asides to the audience in these novels had many similarities and gave coherence to the sentiment-to-activism progression. As in Victor's *Mormon Wives*, for example, Orvilla Belisle's *Mormonism Unveiled* told the story of a virtuous young woman whose "impetuous" husband converted to Mormonism and migrated westward, yielding to one temptation after another, finally taking a second wife and installing her in their home, so that the heroine overheard "words of tenderness once all her own." Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 212. The shock killed her. Maria Ward's *Female Life Among the Mormons* and Alfreda Bell's *Boadicea* involved similar plotlines, relating the stories of heroines who married men of weaker moral stature, held themselves aloof from the "abandoned impurity" of Mormon society as all around them "descended into vice and crime," and suffered from "broken hearts." Belisle, *Boadicea*, 67, 65. In these two novels, both heroines escaped back to the East, where a "sense of duty to the world" induced them "to prepare [their] narrative[s]." Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, iv. This pattern, in which marriage is the (often fatal, always devastating) key to women's vulnerability, and in which there is an emotional (and physical) journey of great pain and danger, ending in death or escape, was the central dramatic story of anti-polygamy fiction around which orbited constellations of associated concepts and dramatic elements. The very predictability of this story, and its emotional reference point in marriage, gave the novels a formulaic gravity that reinforced (even as it redacted and reinvigorated) the relevance of anti-polygamy to the lives of readers far from Utah.

close analysis of opposition to Mormon polygamy in antebellum sentimental fiction, and explores the underlying concern with moral diversity and marriage revealed in early anti-polygamy novels. Part III connects this desire for moral uniformity to a gendered class and regional vision; anti-polygamists condemned class differences and extremes of wealth and poverty as vigorously as they condemned differences in moral structure and extremes of patriarchy in the South and West. Part IV connects the sentimental critique of polygamy to its embrace of legal reform, to the legal reinforcement of monogamy as the only form of marriage across the country, and to the implicit condemnation of all forms of deceit and betrayal of wives by husbands.

I. MORMON POLYGAMY AND ITS ANTEBELLUM OPPONENTS

This Article analyzes the words of novelists who were dedicated to eradicating polygamy, rather than the experiences of those who lived by what Mormons called the "Patriarchal Principle." Recently, there has been a flowering of scholarship on polygamy itself, from studies of theoretical and theological justifications for the practice, to demographic and fertility patterns, to social and family histories.¹⁹ Anti-polygamy, however, has received no such sustained treatment.²⁰

Polygamy was so useful a vehicle for explication and argumentation about gnawing concerns of marriage and moral diversity in the larger society, that the realities of Mormonism in Utah hardly interested most Americans.²¹ What they wanted to read and talk about was

19. So extensive is this new literature that two bibliographies of secondary works have been published over the last twenty years. Davis Bitton, "Mormon Polygamy: A Review Article," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 101-18; Patricia Lyn Scott, "Mormon Polygamy: A Bibliography, 1977-1992," *Journal of Mormon History*, 19 (spring 1993): 133-55. See also Lawrence Foster, "A Little Known Defense of Polygamy from the Mormon Press in 1842," *Dialogue* 9 (1974): 21-34B; Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Stanley S. Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Western Humanities Review* 10 (1956): 229-39; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy, A History* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1989).

20. Anti-polygamy, I should note here, has not been altogether ignored. Many of the studies of Utah and Mormonism cited herein are valuable also for their investigation of anti-polygamy, for much of Mormon life in the nineteenth century was conditioned by the campaign. Yet anti-polygamy has never been studied in its entirety, with attention to contemporary thought on law, marriage, religion, and government. This may change in the near future, not only with this study, but with the work of Joan Smyth Iversen, who is studying anti-polygamy sentiment among eastern and mid-western women's groups from 1880 through Utah statehood and beyond. Most work on anti-polygamy to date has been done by historians of Mormonism, who moonlight, as it were, on anti-polygamy. This by no means discredits their work (on which I have drawn repeatedly), but inevitably, anti-polygamy appears as a side act—monochromatic, sometimes even demonic—rather than as an intricate, often conflicted moral reform campaign.

21. This lack of interest in an open-minded exploration of the benefits and drawbacks of alternative marital structure did not go unremarked, or unchallenged, by Mormons. Mormon men and women vocally defended their faith, and proclaimed their voluntary participation in polygamy. The most comprehensive documentation of Mormon efforts to explain and justify

polygamy and the presumed consequences of such a "barbarous" marital practice.²² And yet there was a factual kernel at the core of all anti-polygamy fiction.

Polygamy fascinated the American reading public in part because the United States was home to a well-organized and geographically concentrated colony of polygamists in one of its western territories.²³ Faithful Mormons migrated to the Great Salt Lake Basin with their leader, Brigham Young, in 1847. Their trek westward, remarkable both for its organization and its destination—an arid, remote, and forbidding area that at the time belonged to Mexico and could only be reached by an arduous trip across plains, deserts, and mountains—was motivated primarily by the persecution the sect had endured wherever it settled.²⁴

their practice of polygamy is found in the four-volume history of Utah written at the end of the nineteenth century by Orson F. Whitney, himself a polygamist. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: G.Q. Cannon & Sons, Co., 1892-1904). The classic defense by a woman was written by Whitney's mother. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884).

Yet for every tract defending polygamy, many more were published attacking it. Written by apostates and territorial officials, as well as the eastern novelists studied in this Article, these Utah-based polemics guaranteed that the "realities" of polygamy were highly contested throughout the territorial period. See, for example, Fanny Stenhouse, *A Lady's Life Among the Mormons* (New York: American News Co. 1872); Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19; or, The Story of a Life in Bondage* (Hartford: Dustin, Gilman & Co. 1874), both written by former Mormons, and describing the same kind of suffering womanhood as depicted in the escaped-wife narratives of a more clearly fictional sort.

22. Polygamy so dominated thinking about Mormons and Mormonism after the mid-1850's that other issues were given short shrift, according to some critics. Methodist missionary Reverend C.P. Lyford, for example, long an opponent of the Mormon Church, complained bitterly that polygamy had captured public attention, and that he could not convince the nation to focus on the Mormon priesthood, which he considered the real threat to "Christianity and civilization":

Our public men can only pronounce against the crime of polygamy; the press can see only polygamy in Utah; the public mind is impressed with only the heinousness of polygamy. . . . [But] the prolific cause of so many and so great evils in Utah . . . is that arbitrary, despotic, and absolute hierarchy known as the Mormon Priesthood.

The Northern Christian Advocate, 18 February 1881.

23. Anti-polygamy fiction thus blended "the factual and the fanciful," a practice common in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Cohen, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*, 16B.

24. For useful descriptions of how early Mormonism was both unique, and uniquely American, see Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 77-128; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979). For detailed descriptions of the persecutions endured by early members before the exodus, see Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1978); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: A Biography of Joseph Smith* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1945); B.H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: The First Century* (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1930), vols. 1-2.

Early Mormonism has been widely studied. Ralph Waldo Emerson called the faith "an after-clap of Puritanism."²⁵ Twentieth-century scholars have explored this insight and added new ones. Mormonism has been analyzed as a rejection of the market revolution, a product of democracy, a gigantic adolescent rebellion, an entirely new religious tradition, and the apotheosis of revivalism.²⁶ It was also, and was overwhelmingly so understood by its followers and its contemporaries, a challenge to the emerging order of gender relations in the 1830's and 1840's, exacerbating tensions produced by the very forces (revolutions—political and economic—democracy, mobility, and so on) that created the atmosphere in which Mormonism itself was born.²⁷

The association of polygamy and Mormonism is commonly dated to a revelation received by founder and first prophet Joseph Smith in 1843, despite persistent rumors at even earlier dates.²⁸ Known as the "Revelation on Celestial Marriage,"²⁹ and still the basic Mormon text on the importance of marriage and the family, the 1843 document was dictated to his private secretary by Smith at roughly the same time that he married a young woman who had been living with the family in Nauvoo (over the strenuous objections of his first wife, Emma, who was not reconciled to plural marriage despite harsh divine command).³⁰

25. The quote is from a reminiscence published by James Bradley Thayer a dozen years after the visit of Emerson with a party of friends to Salt Lake in 1871. In response to an observation by one of the party that Mormonism appeals to common people through biblical names and imagery, Emerson is reported to have said, "Yes, it is an after-clap of Puritanism. But one would think that after this Father Abraham could go no further." *A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson* (Boston, 1884), reprinted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (New York: Knopf, 1958), 382, 384.

26. Cross, *Burned-Over District*; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 113-22, 167-70; R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press 1986), 25-47; Charles C. Sellers, "God and Mammon," chap. 7 in *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1814-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Shipp, *Mormonism*; David Brion Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," *New England Quarterly* 26 (June 1953): 154-85; Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61 (October 1980): 356-86.

27. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiences of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Louis Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

28. For an exhaustive review of all the evidence of polygamy prior to 1843 and after 1890, see D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and the New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue* 18 (spring 1985): 9-105.

29. See "Revelation on Celestial Marriage," in *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, 1989), 266-73.

30. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 131-56.

At the time, and for almost a decade afterwards, polygamy remained a closely kept secret, revealed to a few trusted church leaders, and of course to the select women who married Smith and his lieutenants.³¹ In public, Smith, before his death at the hands of an anti-Mormon mob in 1844, and Brigham Young and other leaders after Smith's lynching, uniformly and repeatedly denied rumors of plural marriage. Missionaries in England, for example, published tracts denying polygamy, and quoted passages from the Book of Mormon that condemned the taking of more than one wife.³² Polygamy remained only one of a litany of real and imagined complaints about Mormon aberrance.³³

After the exodus to the Great Salt Lake Basin, Mormon leaders relaxed their restrictions on polygamy, and the reality of plural marriage became ever more difficult to deny. Travelers passing through Salt Lake reported that Mormon men flaunted multiple wives.³⁴ At a special conference called in August 1852, the Church acknowledged what had long been rumored. Elder Orson Pratt, himself a polygamist, read the 1843 revelation aloud to the congregation, and delivered a lengthy sermon on the religious and social superiority of polygamy.³⁵

31. For discussions of early polygamy and the secrecy that surrounded the practice, see Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Protecting the Lord's Anointed," chap. 3 in *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 29-40.

32. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 5-12; David J. Whittaker, "The Bone in the Throat: Orson Pratt and the Public Announcement of Plural Marriage," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (July 1987): 293-314; *Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star* 15 (Supplement, 1853): 18-23; *Deseret News* 2, Extra (14 September 1852); *Journal of Discourses* 1 (1854): 53-66; *St. Louis Luminary* 1 (17 and 24 February 1855): 49-53. According to *The Book of Mormon*, "Behold, David and Solomon had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me saith the Lord. . . . Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." Jacob 2:24, 27, in *The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1989). Theologically, the revelation given to Smith in 1843 superseded earlier commands.

33. For example, only one of the hundred or so anti-Mormon books and pamphlets published prior to 1852 was primarily an anti-polygamy tract. Published privately by the author in 1847 in Lynn, Massachusetts, the pamphlet appears not to have been widely circulated. See generally Chad Flake, *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830-1930: Books, Pamphlets, Periodicals, and Broadides Relating to the First Century of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1978); Chad Flake, *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830-1930: Ten Year Supplement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989). On anti-Mormonism in the pre-1852 period, including theories of Mormon secretiveness and disloyalty, see David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (September 1960): 205-24.

34. See, for example, John Gunnison, who wrote of his stay in Salt Lake in 1850: "That many [Mormon leaders] have a large number of wives in Deseret is perfectly manifest to anyone residing among them." *The Mormons, or, Latter-Day Saints in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1852), 66.

35. The proceedings of the entire conference were published in a special pamphlet issued by the *Deseret News* on September 14, 1852. The *Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star* also devoted a whole issue to reprinting the contents of the conference.

Critics in the North reacted with a virulence out of proportion to the Mormons' small numbers and isolated locale. Polygamy became a by-word for the abuse of women, the standard of all that was objectionable about Mormonism. By 1856, when the Republican Party first called in its national platform for the federal prohibition of "those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy and Slavery" in the territories,³⁶ the ideological foundation had been laid for a sustained legal campaign based on the imagined consequences of polygamy for individual wives and husbands, for the rule of law, and for all of American society.

The anti-polygamy novels of the mid-1850's were the first to describe and decry the perceived threat. Their imaginative worlds (worlds in which marriage disintegrated, women were degraded and suffered, men were tempted and fell, and legal order evaporated) interpreted and magnified the threat, creating personal narratives that resonated with eastern audiences.³⁷ Women wrote these novels; women imagined these worlds as threats to their own security—yet men as well as women thrilled to the tales, suggesting that women's anti-polygamy fiction had a wide audience, and clear connotations for the politics of reform.³⁸

II. "ALL THAT IS PURE AND SAVING IN THE MIDST OF THE SELFISHNESS OF MAN": SENTIMENTALISM AND THE VULNERABILITY OF MARRIAGE

Metta Victor explained to her readers in 1856 that monogamous

36. Kirk H. Porter, comp., *National Party Platforms* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 48.

37. Over the past 25 years, scholars who have studied anti-polygamy fiction have concluded that these novels were "vehicles of erotica," or products of a widespread "fear of sexuality," or of deeply suppressed rape fantasies on the part of authors and readers. Arrington and Haupt, "Intolerable Zion," 244 n.5; Cannon, "The Awesome Power of Sex," 67. Other standard works of Mormon historiography attribute the success of anti-polygamy fiction to non-Mormons' "palpitating desire to be shocked by the hideous aspects of Mormonism," or simply to non-Mormon "fantasy." Lynn, "Sensational Virtue," 108; Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 82-83; Kern, *Ordered Love*, 54-55; Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Holt, 1954), 25. The content of anti-polygamy fiction, these scholars agree, reveals more about the views of the authors than actual Mormon practices. Yet the relationship of anti-polygamy novels to the broader culture—their focus on marriage as the key to happiness, peace, and social stability—remains largely unexplored.

38. There is a growing body of scholarship on the place of reading in antebellum America. See generally Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ronald J. Zboray, "Reading Patterns in Antebellum America: Evidence in the Charge Records of the New York Society Library," *Libraries and Culture* 26 (1991); Cathy N. Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Jane Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For a discussion of the uses of sentimental anti-polygamy fiction by Congressmen, and the impact of anti-polygamy fiction on political consciousness, see text accompanying notes 166-179 below.

marriage was "all that is pure and saving in the midst of the selfishness of man: one abiding love, one hearth, one home."³⁹ This was a big claim, but one that anti-polygamist writers in the 1850's made incessantly; marriage was their touchstone, the sun around which all other institutions (and their novels) revolved. Theirs was the initial foray into the realm of popular anti-polygamy; their stamp endured for decades, even as the prime focus of anti-polygamy activity was diverted from its original grounding in literature to more traditionally recognized forms of political and legal organizing.

The story of how anti-polygamy sentiment grew in the mid-1850's is in part the story of stories. Anti-polygamists developed storylines that explained both the causes and consequences of polygamy in comprehensible, if conclusory, terms. Indisputably, these plots had little basis in what we refer to as "fact." Yet their pertinence to nineteenth-century beliefs about the political and moral value of monogamy for women, and for the nation as a whole, is incontestable. Many thousands of readers were moved by the stories they read; they were convinced of the importance of the public role of marriage in part because these stories were so deeply grounded in (and manipulative of) emotional fact.⁴⁰

During the 1850's, while a clearly defined anti-polygamy "movement" was still a decade away, several factors combined to make abhorrence of polygamy a widespread, and ultimately a politically powerful, phenomenon. Primarily through sentimental fiction, women authors in the mid-1850's created an image of Mormon polygamy that stuck like a burr. Anti-polygamy novelists were remarkably successful, in part because social and economic conditions created a ready market for their books, and in part because the message of women's suffering they sent to legislators was politically palatable. They helped create an intellectual climate in which the punishment of polygamous Mormons was embraced as an essential component of national morality—even national survival—based on the defense of monogamous marriage. By 1860, all federal actions taken to enact and enforce legislation in Utah were directed towards the eradication of plural marriage.⁴¹ By 1890, when the church

39. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 199.

40. On the emotional response of readers to sentimental literature, see Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence"; Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86-118.

41. There are several studies that provide a narrative history of such legislation, including Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 39-83; Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1971); E. Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Richard D. Poll, "The Mormon Question, 1850-1865: A Study in Politics and Public Opinion" (Ph.D. diss.,

capitulated to demands that it abandon polygamy, such actions included the criminal punishment of polygamists, the revocation of the vote for all who could not swear they did not live in a polygamous relationship, and the forfeiture of all but \$50,000 of church property. Anti-polygamy polemic was, in this sense, a component of the engine that powered government into the position of marital watchdog and legal guardian, displacing the oversight of churches and private institutions in the process.⁴²

The anti-polygamy novels painted a picture of the abominations of polygamy that sold well not only in the mid-1850's, but for decades after.⁴³ Edition after edition of Maria Ward's *Female Life Among*

University of California, Berkeley, 1948); and Richard Poll, "The Twin Relic: A Study of Mormon Polygamy and the Campaign by the Government of the United States for Its Abolition, 1852-1890" (master's thesis, Texas Christian University, 1939).

42. I should note here that there is no conclusive proof that anti-polygamy fiction "caused" the political anti-polygamy campaign in a simple or tangible sense. Yet the worldview, the emotive style, the cadences of anti-polygamy fiction, first coined in the mid-1850's, recurred throughout subsequent decades—in congressional speeches, public lectures, newspaper editorials, sermons, dozens of novels, and hundreds of periodical stories. The publication of the four central novels discussed in this Article in the mid-1850's precedes by so short a timespan the shift from a more generalized condemnation of Mormon rebelliousness to a highly focused anti-polygamy among politicians, that the relationship is at a fundamental level indisputable, however imprecise.

There were several other aspects of affairs in Utah that troubled the statesmen concerned with territorial administration in Utah in the 1850's. More than one federal official fled the territory, complaining that Brigham Young and his cohorts had no respect for territorial law, and even less for the hapless official charged with protecting the interests of the federal government. Perry Brocchus, for example, claimed that his life had been threatened, that Mormons were "ready to spring upon me like hyenas and destroy me." His letter is reprinted in *Congressional Globe*, 32nd Cong., 1st sess., 1852, appendix, 25, and excerpted in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 250-53. The infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre, in which several Mormons dressed as Indians participated in the grisly slaughter of a wagon train of some 140 emigrants who were traveling through northern Utah, followed by a cover-up by church officials, did little to endear the Mormons to the rest of the nation. See generally Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 2d ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962). President Buchanan even hoped to divert attention from the powder keg of slavery by sending troops to quell what he called a state of rebellion in the territory—the so-called "Mormon War" of 1857. See Norman Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict: 1850-1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 75.

As early as 1850, Young petitioned for admission of the state of "Deseret" to the union, boldly claiming for himself and his fellow Mormons all the power and dignity of sovereignty. For a useful analysis of Mormon attempts to achieve statehood, see Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 7-40. See also Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History*, 2d ed. (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 128-46.

43. At mid-century, the market for fiction was burgeoning; women and young people bought and read books as they never had before. The power of the printed word was extended far beyond the male elite that traditionally had controlled literary taste and output. Publishers' marketing practices improved rapidly in the late 1840's and early 1850's. Closely tracking the transportation and mechanical revolutions, book jobbers travelled thousands of miles by rail, peddling cheap books churned out by steam presses. See generally the work of William Charvat, who has studied the invoice books and correspondence of several publishing houses, tracking the increasing professionalization of both authors and booksellers in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Athens, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1968). At the same time, cultural forces influenced the content of those books. The intellectual tolerance of

the Mormons (nineteen separate entries appear in the National Union Catalog of pre-1955 imprints) was issued from its first publication in 1855 until the final version in 1913.⁴⁴ Equally important is the fact that much of the subsequent flood of anti-polygamy fiction (the 1870's and 1880's were particularly fruitful decades)⁴⁵ was largely derivative of the first texts that appeared in the mid-1850's. Similar stories appear in countless different guises, and in many different formats.⁴⁶ It was in this atmosphere—in a nation saturated with ideas and emotions first advanced in the 1850's—that the legal campaign against Mormon polygamy took root and thrived. For all these reasons, understanding the context and content of the anti-polygamy fiction of the 1850's is an essential first step in exploring the legal history of anti-polygamy.⁴⁷

the South eroded just at the moment when northern publishers began to send their agents as far as the railroads would reach. Even if the South had continued to welcome books on a variety of potentially troublesome topics, the greater stratification of wealth, not to mention the less developed transportation system of the South, ensured that southern sensitivities would not impinge substantially on the profitability of books and magazines advocating abolition, temperance, or other reforms. The spectacular success of Susan Warner's *Wide, Wide World* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* taught the publishing world a lesson it would not soon forget. See generally Charvat, *Profession of Authorship*; William Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: G. Braziller, 1961); Ronald G. Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 177-201; Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), and Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

44. *The National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1979), 648:287-88.

45. For lists of anti-polygamy novels (newspaper and magazine serials are not included, but were plentiful), see Arrington and Haupt, "Intolerable Zien," 257-60; Lynn, "Sensational Virtues," 110-12.

46. See, for example, Jennie Anderson Froiseth, ed., *The Women of Mormonism; or The Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves* (Detroit: J.J. Chilton, 1882); Rosetta Luce Gilchrist, *Apples of Sodom: A Story of Mormon Life* (Cleveland: W.W. Williams, 1885); and Cornelia Paddock, *In the Toils; or, Martyrs of the Latter Days* (Chicago: Shepard, Tobias and Co., 1879). These texts replicate the literature of the 1850's in many essentials. The similarity of the postbellum texts to the novels studied in this Article, and the relative constancy of their emotional appeal, corroborates Laura Hanft Korobkin's finding in her study of the Beecher-Tilton trial that the "sentimental synthesis" exerted a "rhetorical dominance" even in the mid-1870's. Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 9.

Yet while the plotlines and many of the figures stayed remarkably similar, anti-polygamy authors of the post-bellum period had positive law on their side. The constitutional abolition of slavery also played a key role in the transformation of anti-polygamy from a movement that emphasized legal reform into one whose primary goal was enforcement. For the distinction between arguments deployed by anti-polygamists before and after the Civil War, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The Liberty of Self-Degradation: Anti-Polygamy, Woman's Suffrage and the Law of Marriage and Divorce," *Journal of American History* (forthcoming, December 1996).

47. For example, when Metta Victor arrived in New York City in the late 1840's to pursue a career as a novelist and poet, she was part of a trend. By mid-century, just as the Mormons solidified and publicly defended their polygamous practices in Utah, women authors (and their readers) had firmly established female prominence in the literary market. On the importance of literacy among women, and the ready market for books among both women and young people, see Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 377-79; and Zboray, *Fictive People*.

The relationship between law and literature has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Not only have legal scholars and historians explored the strategic role of narrative in litigation,⁴⁸ they have also studied the role of legal theory in literary texts, and literary theory in legal texts.⁴⁹ Most interesting, and most productive from the perspective of the legal historian, are studies that historicize the function of stories, that connect changes in legal strategy and legal theory to cultural constructs and literary genres that themselves change over time.⁵⁰ Sentimental visions of justice, sentimental argument about the role of emotional identification with victims of all sorts, has been an area of particularly fruitful inquiry, especially in the study of trials in the Civil War era.⁵¹

Through letters, diaries, books and magazines, women spoke to each other of their fears and triumphs, their daily lives and lifelong struggles. In the process, they explained, organized, and transformed the world they inhabited. For helpful studies on the role of reading and writing in women's lives in the nineteenth century, see Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 76-88; Barbara Sicherman, "Sense and Sensibility: A Case Study of Women's Reading in Late-Victorian America," in Cathy N. Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literary and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 215. See also Sally Mitchell, "The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading in England, 1835-1860," *Victorian Studies* 25 (1982).

48. Lawrence Friedman, for example, has described trial strategy as "narrative competition." "Law, Lawyers, and Popular Culture," *Yale Law Journal* 98 (1989): 1559. See also Kathryn Abrams, "Hearing the Call of Stories," *California Law Review* 79 (1991): 971-1052; Ferguson, "Story and Transcription"; Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence"; Bernard Jackson, "Narrative Theories and Legal Discourse," in Christopher Nash, ed., *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Alexander Welsh, *Strong Representations: Narrative and Circumstantial Evidence in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). On the similarities between the juror and the reader of the novel, see especially Ian Watts, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 29-30; Welsh, *Strong Representations*, 60-63; and Barbara Shapiro, "Circumstantial Evidence: Of Law, Literature, and Culture," review of Welsh, *Strong Representations*, *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 5 (1993): 221, 224.

49. On the study of legal thought in literature, see Robert Weisberg, "The Law-Literature Enterprise," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 1 (1988): 1-67; Paul Gewirtz, "Aeschylus' Law," *Harvard Law Review* 101 (1988); Richard A. Posner, *Law and Literature: A Misunderstood Relation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); Sanford Levinson, "Law as Literature," *Texas Law Review* 60 (1982): 373-403.

50. Included in this category of historically grounded scholarly treatments of legal and literary constructs are Korobkin, "The Maintenance of Mutual Confidence"; Hartog, "Husband's Rights"; Ferguson, "Story and Transcription"; Susan Staves, "Money for Honor: Damages for Criminal Conversation," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982): 279-297; Michael Grossberg, "Battling over Motherhood in Philadelphia: A Study of Antebellum American Trial Courts as Arenas of Conflict," in Mindie Lazarus-Black and Susan F. Hirsch, eds., *Contested States: Law, Hegemony and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 153-177; Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak," 487-90; Cara W. Robertson, "Representing 'Miss Lizzie': Cultural Convictions in the Trial of Lizzie Borden," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 8 (1996): 351-415.

51. Ferguson, "Story and Transcription"; Hartog, "Husband's Rights"; Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence." See also Cohen, "The Prostitute and the Somnambulist"; David Brion Davis, *Homicide in American Fiction, 1798-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 147-236.

The courtroom use of sentimental argument, of narratives that appealed to the emotional structures of the lives of jurors and litigants, is thus a well-established, if very recent, insight of legal historians. My research into the narrative strategies of anti-polygamy novels in the antebellum period suggests that the uses of legal argument in fiction, the construction of a narrative around a legal problem, is also a potentially productive area for scholarly inquiry. Not only was the sentimental vision of anti-polygamy profoundly conditioned by the battle over a legal definition (what counts as "marriage" in law), but also by a profound faith in law and legal definitions to work fundamental justice. Monogamous marriage was the union of law and sentiment, the contract—as Walter Benn Michaels put it in another context—that unified love and property, desire and form.⁵² The sentimentalists' critique of the law of marriage, this perspective suggests, was based on a deep commitment to the importance of legal structure, of formal support for emotional truths. The painful discovery of discrepancy between law and sentiment, then, was not so much a critique of all law, as it was a recipe for legal reform. Laura Hanft Korobkin has argued in analyzing narrative in the Beecher-Tilton adultery trial that "the sentimental text achieves its object by altering the reader's world view, an alteration that necessarily triggers action in the reader's life."⁵³ This strategy, when employed in legal arenas, deploys a sentimental formula (Beecher's character was fundamentally inconsistent with any form of deceit) to answer a legal question (Did Beecher commit adultery with Elizabeth Tilton?). In my reading of pre-Civil War anti-polygamy texts, novelists deployed a legal formula (the definition of marriage) to answer a sentimental question (What is the surest way to protect "our national hearthstone"?). Seen in this light, not only did sentimental fiction provide a blueprint for effective legal argument, but effective legal argument provided a blueprint for sentimental fiction. The goal of the sentimental project, the appeal to the pain of the reader, to sympathy generated by identification with the plight of the victim (in the anti-polygamy version, identification with the suffering of women in polygamy), was the creation of a new story in which the reader's own marriage was implicated and threatened by the existence of polygamy.⁵⁴ The appeal to law as a solution to the emotional devastation of an imagined world in which

52. Walter Benn Michaels, "The Contracted Heart," *New Literary History* 21 (1990): 522-23.

53. Korobkin, "The Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 32, citing Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 141. Cf. Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 98.

54. On the use of pain as a means of identification, see Robyn R. Warhol, *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak," 470-75, 479-87.

legal form was manipulated by villains, was, of course, the explicit project of the narrator, who had (by confiding the story of suffering to a sympathetic ear) already transformed her first reader into an activist. The fictive blueprint for legal reform was thus complete in the novels themselves.⁵⁵

The pain that readers were invited to experience was that of betrayal. The abuse of trust, the exposure of an unexpected vulnerability, was peculiarly the preserve of women in antebellum anti-polygamy. In much sentimental and reform fiction, the threat to women from evils brought home by their husbands (a key component in nineteenth-century reform movements) was the central dramatic element. As literary historians have pointed out, sentimentalism in general "tended to divide the world into the morally unambiguous categories of victim and perpetrator, while its textual strategies aimed to induce an identification with the deserving but abused victim, prototypically a child, slave, or orphan."⁵⁶ To this list of commonly depicted victims, I would add "wives." Tales of virtuous women, legally bound to men who indulged their most harmful desires, figured prominently in the work of antebellum sentimentalists. Mormon polygamy was just one of their targets: Victor, for example, wrote temperance and anti-slavery novels, as well as anti-polygamy fiction, all during the 1850's. Another anti-polygamy author wrote an anti-Catholic novel (in which a priest not only seduced an innocent young girl, but murdered the child of their union) shortly before her anti-polygamy book was published.⁵⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe was well known as an anti-polygamist, as well as an anti-slavery writer. The "abominations of polygamy," to use the novelists' most common label, were so much grist for their publishing mill.

55. The connection between a fictive or narrative blueprint and moral legislation has been the subject of recent English and American scholarship. The relationship between fiction and reform is central, for example, to the work of John Bender, who argues that "attitudes toward prison which were formulated between 1719 and 1779 in narrative literature and art—especially in prose fiction—sustained and, on my reconstruction, enabled the conception and construction of actual penitentiary prisons later in the eighteenth century." *Imagining The Penitentiary: Prison and the Architecture of Mind in England, 1719-1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1. See also Alexander Welsh, *Strong Representations: Narrative and Circumstantial Evidence in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). For American uses of fiction and story-telling in both reform and litigative settings, see sources cited in notes 48 to 51 above.

56. Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 13. See also Philip Fisher, "Making a Thing into a Man: The Sentimental Novel and Slavery," chap. 3 in *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*; Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

57. Orvilla S. Belisle, *The Arch Bishop; or Romanism in the United States* (Philadelphia: William White Smith 1854).

Betrayal (of wives by their husbands, and, in at least some cases, the possibility of betrayal by wives of their husbands) was a constant theme of sentimentalism.⁵⁸ Explaining the meaning and context of betrayal was an essential component of designing the rehabilitative structure, of implying the need for action beyond the confines of the text to reunite "form and feeling, law and love."⁵⁹ Anti-polygamists argued that law and love were already united in monogamous marriage, and that polygamy, by introducing a form of marriage that was at war with the feelings of women, threatened to destroy the whole fabric of society. Sentimental fiction, in other words, at least in its anti-polygamy incarnation, could articulate the profound emotional significance of legal categories. Sentimentality and positive law, in this context, were not oppositional, but mutually reinforcing.

Yet the weakness of law, the lack of legal sanction for violations of monogamy, allowed weak men to step off the path of virtue, anti-polygamists claimed, to drag not only their wives, but by extension all of society, into a vortex of suffering, a legal vacuum in which deceit and betrayal were the only constants. The claim that lawlessness was the problem, that the unity and trust of marriage could only be restored by the invigoration of law, was an argument not only for the efficacy of legal reform, but also for the legal restraint of men to protect women. This mobilization of legal rhetoric, the conflation of the interests of wives with the law of monogamous marriage, had great appeal, especially when tales about the absence of law were encrusted with layers of pathos. The pain of women whose husbands perverted the very marriage bed with other women was poignant testimony to the vulnerability, and the importance, of the home.

Sentimentalists in general, and anti-polygamists in particular, ratcheted up the importance of household responsibilities and relationships to the point where they became the key to national survival or doom, all under the aegis of women. Blending family, church, and home in the person of the housewife, popular writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and her older sister Catharine Beecher advocated wifely control of the household. The glue that held the whole structure together was emotion—love of a husband for his wife, love of children for their mother, and the returning love for all of them from a devoted woman, whose innate morality and wisdom

58. Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 28-29; Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*; Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 17. Walter Benn Michaels argues that the constant effort by novelists to distinguish marriage from relations of contract, even as their characters contracted marriages, virtually guaranteed that the form of marriage would fail to satisfy its cultural demands. Michaels, "The Contracted Heart," 521-22.

59. Michaels, "The Contracted Heart," 495, 521.

made her God's representative in the family.⁶⁰ The marital home truly became the "national hearthstone," the wife its guardian angel.⁶¹

The emotional argument for the redistribution of power from husbands to wives was connected in part to a broad-based, and in many senses intensely conflicted, adaptation to the market revolution—the explosion of economic forces in the early nineteenth century that redirected myriad aspects of Americans' personal and work lives. To accommodate a market-based economy, and to abandon sexual habits developed when large families were an economic boon, required long and painstaking intellectual and behavioral modifications. Sexual deference to wives, at least in part, was a reaction to forces that were outside the control of women.⁶²

But the sentimental reconstruction of marriage was more than just damage control. The reconfiguration of power within the household,

60. Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York: J.B. Ford & Co. 1860).

61. For example, see Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Barbara L. Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981). Sexuality, especially the redefinition of female sexuality, was an essential component of this re-visioning of marriage. Women, as Nancy Cott has demonstrated, were supposed to be less likely than men to crave extra-marital or improper sexual intercourse, less likely to fall victim to the penalties of "overindulgence." Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 162-81. According to many mid-century treatise writers, male and female alike, woman's natural state, contrary to earlier conceptions of rampant female sexuality, was one of moderation, constancy, and self-restraint in matters sexual. See generally, Degler, *At Odds*, 253-63; Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 242-45. Men were urged, for their own health as well as for the health of their wives, to allow women to dictate the frequency and timing of intimate relations. Even more important, both women and men were assured (by the same treatise writers) that purification of sexual mores was contingent on this ethic of deference to wives. On this point, see Cott, "Passionless," 165-69; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly* 23 (October 1971): 563, 583. Women's innate sexual virtue made them reliable guides to proper sexual behavior within marriage, which men were urged to accept and respect for the superior spirituality it symbolized.

62. Some scholars argue that sentimentalism was the product of a relative deterioration in the status of women caused by industrialization. Epstein, *Politics of Domesticity*, 73-75; Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 162-66; Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), 85-86. See also Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). In this view, sentimentality was an effort to compensate for economic irrelevance by positing an alternative to the market economy that was in the process of devouring women's traditional economic role. Given the ultimate, and indisputable, triumph of market capitalism, these historians maintain, domesticity was doomed to failure. This view was the central thesis of the analysis by Ann Douglas of the work of a group of some 60 middle-class women and Protestant clergymen in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Douglas, both women and clerics were hopelessly marginalized by secular economic activity, and they were active participants in their own downfall through their embrace of sentimentality and narcissism, which led ineluctably down the slippery slope to consumerism. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 6-13.

and the modifications of sexual behavior that went along with it, allowed many American women to control as never before the number of children they bore, the management of the household, and the familial consumption of goods—literary, as well as more conventional, commodities. Wives claimed a new jurisdiction, the home, in which they exercised oversight and emotional power to an unprecedented degree. Women had good reason to welcome—even to embrace—the market revolution.⁶³

The market for sentimental fiction in the 1850's, the commercial success of anti-polygamy novels, as well as other sentimental reform fiction written by women, provided a material confirmation of the power of the sentimental formula.⁶⁴ Anti-polygamy was just one of many issues that sentimental writers tackled in the 1850's. Alcohol, slavery, women's property, and even (with many caveats and much backing and filling and circumlocution) separation and divorce, were treated widely by women authors (and activists) as issues peculiarly suited to women's superior morality and emotional understanding. Universal white male suffrage may have cut into women's traditional informal political voice in the first half of the nineteenth century, but they found other routes to political influence, if not raw power.⁶⁵

63. There is a growing scholarship that posits women as the progenitors of the market revolution. According to this thesis, women's desire for consumer goods propelled the traditional subsistence and barter economy toward a cash-based market. See, for example, Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William & Mary Quarterly* 46 (January 1989): 120-24, 137-40. Whether or not women were the unwitting cause of capitalism, they consistently sought to replicate the conditions produced by the market, even on the frontier. As Julie Roy Jeffrey found in her study, women on the frontier, including plural wives, wanted more than anything to recreate the domestic environment of the East. *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979).

64. By 1850, publishing was a \$12-million-a-year business. Clever publishers made it their business to court women authors and paid them handsomely. The popular Fanny Fern received the princely sum of \$100 per column from the enterprising Robert Bonner of the *New York Ledger*, a story paper that serialized her novels. Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper, 1956), 125. Metta Victor, according to several sources, was offered a contract of \$25,000 in 1856 by the *New York Weekly* for the exclusive right to serialize her stories for five years in their pages. "Mrs. Metta Victoria Fuller Victor," in Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, eds., *American Women: 1500 Biographies* (New York: Mast, Crowell and Kirkpatrick, 1897), 735; Kathleen L. Maio, "Metta Victoria Fuller Victor," in Lina Mainiero, ed., *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Ungar, 1979-1994), 4:303. It is not clear whether Victor accepted the offer or decided that she could do better on her own. Several of her stories appeared in competing journals.

65. For the erosion of the political power of women and other nonvoting groups in Jacksonian America, see Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 51-53. For an explanation of women's extra-political influence, see Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society 1780-1920," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984):620-647.



Beinecke Library, Yale University. Frontispiece of the 1855 novel *Mormonism Unveiled*, titled "Lizzie Monroe in her Prison—Brigham Young Making Insulting Proposals."

By the 1850's, fiction, especially "factual" narratives such as the anti-polygamy novels, even more than advice books or sermons, communicated this sentimental critique of marriage. Through stories of women whose greatest achievement was the fusion of their inborn spirituality with household duties, anti-polygamists created an idealized marital home in which female affection controlled the thoughts and actions of the entire family, especially the husband. The poignancy of the vulnerability of such affective structures as the marital home, the inability of women to protect their own affections from betrayal and abuse, became the ironic source of action and drama. Inherently exploitive social practices and regulations—the widespread availability of alcohol, the system of chattel slavery, or Mormon polygamy—lured men who might otherwise have been model husbands into vice and destruction of the home.

The authors who championed the protection of marriage, and the readers who made their work so popular, thus had a powerful vision, one that required the state to intervene on behalf of women when male-dominated institutions and practices created an atmosphere in which marriage was distorted by betrayal, to the detriment of women. In these novelists' eyes, polygamy represented a deliberate, even drastic, restriction of the new-found emotional powers of women. The threat, one might counter, was remote indeed, given the isolation of Mormons in Utah. But anti-polygamist writers were convinced that the threat was real—they did not trust the nation to sense the danger to its own spiritual and moral welfare. The result would be the demise of decency, the collapse of civilization. For anti-polygamists understood that Mormons in territorial Utah were not only relevant to the rest of the nation, but that their claim to redefine the law of marriage exposed the fundamental weakness of all legal protections for women—the problem of moral diversity.

III. "MY SPIRIT SHALL BURN
IN DEFENSE OF THE PURITY OF WOMANHOOD":
MORAL DIVERSITY, FEDERALISM, AND CLASS

Anti-polygamists, like anti-slavery and temperance novelists, were dedicated critics of a legal system that allowed liberty to degenerate into license. The price for such false freedom, they claimed, was paid by women, who suffered at the hands of men whose moral strength was not equal to the temptation. This problem of moral diversity went deeper than occasional simple, sinful self-indulgence, however, to actual legal difference across space, across class, across religions. The weakness in the system exposed by Mormon polygamy, therefore, was a weakness that could topple the whole structure, as precious liberties were perverted into justifications for licentiousness. Inherent in such argument was a profound, if not expert, critique of the federalist concept of states as "laboratories" for social experimentation.

The theme of travel as transformation, of exposure to new and unheralded dangers through migration, dominates anti-polygamy novels. Maria Ward's *Female Life Among the Mormons*, for example, like many subsequent anti-polygamy novels, was a series of stories, each with its own internal plot, designed to highlight one or another of the abominations of polygamy. The tableaux were strung together by a tenuous but ubiquitous plotline; that is, the marriage of the heroine to a Mormon, and the couple's migration westward to Utah. On the long voyage, Mrs. Ward, as the narrator called herself throughout the novel, gradually uncovered the truth about Mor-

monism. Unlike Metta Victor's Margaret, the knowledge did not kill her; Mrs. Ward took the only other avenue open to virtuous women in Utah—she escaped. But her life was forever changed by her experience; her book was the product, as she claimed in her introduction, of her conviction that the world had to be told of a "Truth stranger than Fiction."⁶⁶ This sense of duty to engage in anti-polygamy activism is explained by the tale of suffering that follows Ward's statement of purpose.

Ward's most persistent theme was the degradation of women in marriage and in all aspects of Mormon life. Wives were relegated to an ever more marginal position, as the primitive nature of polygamy eroded the veneer of civilization: "As the principles of Mormonism developed, it became evident that the females were to be regarded as an inferior order of beings. One by one the rights to which they had been accustomed, as well as the courtesies generally conceded to them, were taken away."⁶⁷ Marriage as an emotional journey, Ward's book implies, could not survive the pressure of other journeys, especially of migrations to morally dangerous regions. Faced with the unsavory prospect of polygamy, women took two approaches: The virtuous suffered, even died, while the turpitudinous descended into coarseness and vulgarity.

First wives tended overwhelmingly to fall into the former category; the fatal blow was administered by a callous husband who brought home a second wife. These first wives never died of any very specific disease: They simply could not bear the pain of life any longer. An example gives the flavor of the deadly consequences of Mormon polygamy. Mrs. Murray, a patient wife and devoted mother, learned that her husband had taken a second wife. Shortly thereafter, her children sickened and died of dysentery on the long march to Utah. She called Mrs. Ward to be with her at her deathbed:

"I wished that you should be present with me, Mrs. Ward, in this, which I firmly believe to be my last hour. I have long had a presentiment that my death was near, and the thought was one of rejoicing. I had nothing on earth to live for but my children, and now they are removed, and I thank God—I thank God!"

She lay still a moment and then resumed: "You have sympathized with me in my great affliction, an affliction which has been sanctified to my soul's eternal interest; once I believed in Mormonism; once I forsook the faith of my father, and forgot the dying admonitions of my mother. But the estrangement of my husband opened my eyes, and I felt—I knew—that a belief which

66. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, iii-iv.

67. *Ibid.*, 321.

sanctioned and promoted such sinful practices, must be of the Evil One; and then I said, in the language of the patriarch, 'Oh, my soul! come not into their secret; to their assembly, my honor, be thou not united.' But circumstance forbade my return to the friends of my youth, for I must be weaned from my idols."

"You weary yourself, Mrs. Murray," I said; "here, take this," and I administered a pleasant cordial.

"Feel my pulse," she said.

I did so; there was not the least perceptible flutter. I saw that she was sinking rapidly.

"Joy! Joy!" she said. "I go."⁶⁸

If the scene seems lachrymose, it was supposed to. Such scenes occurred throughout anti-polygamy fiction, and sentimental writing in general. The deaths of young women and children, and the tears of release and regret that accompanied an untimely death, were a special language in sentimentality. The virtuous died young in a cruel world, destroyed by the contradiction between emotional truth and social reality. For wives, vulnerability came from the center of their emotional universe—the "hearth" (the rhetorical relationship between "heart" and "hearth" should not be overlooked) that should by all rights have been made of "stone," but was instead revealed to be of far less durable construction, exposing women to the brutal elements without.⁶⁹

The deaths of broken-hearted wives were never entirely wasted, even if their redemptive effect was not immediately apparent. Margaret Wilde in *Mormon Wives*, for example, converted her former enemy Sarah Irving to a life of anti-polygamy activism. Death, in this sense, was not defeat, but an exercise in reformation. By dying, Margaret forever escaped the power of her husband to harm her further, and provided a compelling example to those left behind of the price paid by women for male depredation. Margaret, in short, was the real victor, although she died to win her point.⁷⁰

68. *Ibid.*, 172.

69. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, vii, 199. Indeed the home was the metaphor for women's souls in anti-polygamy fiction; it was the "charmed precinct" where "peace and love and innocent joy" were realized. *Ibid.*, 197. The home, however, was only as protected as the society in which it was situated; its private purity was subject to contamination by outside forces. Alfreda Eva Bell put it bluntly, "Among the Mormons, the peculiar sanctity of the home is unknown. There is not that privacy, that secluded retreat, which makes every house, where things are as they should be, a sort of Penetralia, or Inner Temple, a *Sanctum Sanctorum*." Bell, *Boadicea*, 24.

70. Jane Tompkins makes this observation eloquently in her analysis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "Stories like the death of little Eva are compelling for the same reason that the story of Christ's death is compelling; they enact a philosophy, as much political as religious, in which the pure and powerless die to save the powerful and corrupt, and thereby show themselves more powerful than those they save." *Sensational Designs*, 127-28.

Second wives did not always receive such sympathetic treatment; women who would consent to polygamy were by definition morally bankrupt. Ward described one aspiring plural wife as a "coquette," who was in part culpable "for the continuation of polygamy, because [she] preferred a rich man, with a dozen wives, to a poor one without any, and, though repentance must inevitably ensue, it would be too late."⁷¹ First wives were terrorized by such jades, who ruled with rods of iron, usurping wifely authority, and destroying "all domestic peace . . . and all household affection."⁷²

Despite the presence of a few bad apples, however, most women shunned polygamy in all its aspects. How, then, could one explain the presence of women in Mormonism in the first place? How could they accede to their own degradation? At the most immediate level, of course, the problem was one of federalism—legal difference was to blame. Women were vulnerable to deception, precisely because their moral nature, their trust in affection, combined with their ignorance of the law, made betrayal so easy. All the novelists agreed that women whose husbands converted to Mormonism had little choice but to follow them to Utah, especially given that the doctrine of polygamy was carefully concealed until escape was virtually out of the question.⁷³ But what about those who actually converted, and those who remained in Utah despite the practice of plural marriage?

Maria Ward gave two alternative explanations, both of which were widely advanced in subsequent novels and magazine literature. The first described how single women were recruited, and the second focused on the apparent acquiescence of women in Utah. In *Female Life Among the Mormons*, beautiful Ellen's description of her

71. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 224, 319.

72. *Ibid.*, 410. "Discord, confusion and misery reigned supreme" in polygamous families, Ward claimed. *Ibid.*, 387. Wives refused to work in harmony with one another; one put the cutlery away as soon as another set the table. Ward described the household of Brigham Young, whose wives were consumed with jealousy of one another: "[E]ach one wishes to take precedence of the others. The eldest fancies that her age entitles her to the place of honor. The youngest, because she is a beauty, and a favorite; and the middle-aged, on account of her wealth. They will not eat together, because each one wishes to sit at the head of the table; each one also aspires to superintend and direct the affairs of the household, while the others perform the labor." *Ibid.*, 300-01.

73. There is an interesting subcurrent to this line of argument, which indirectly encouraged women *not* to follow their husbands into a faith (and perhaps into anything else) that did not appeal to their own sense of what was right. The justification for challenging the authority of husbands was usually based on a reference to an external power figure, be it a mother or a clergyman (note, however, with the exception of clergymen, that the appeal was made to a "female" personage, rather than a father or brother). In Ward's novel, for example, as one woman lay dying of a broken heart, she lamented that she had "forgot[ten] the dying admonitions of my mother." *Ibid.*, 172. On occasion, women openly defied authority when commanded to enter plural marriage. "I dare to disobey any man, who seeks to make me a slave, and whose tyranny would embitter my whole life," declared a spirited young woman to her father. *Ibid.*, 358.

seduction illustrates the first category: Like the wives whose husbands concealed the truth from them until it was too late, many women, charged anti-polygamists, were actually coerced by external forces (demonic or otherwise). Joseph Smith, confided the young woman to Mrs. Ward, used the extraordinary hypnotic power of "ANIMAL MAGNETISM":

His presence was of the basilisk. He exerted a mystical magical influence over me—a sort of sorcery that deprived me of the unrestricted exercise of free will. It never entered into my brain that he could cherish impure motives; that one professing such sainted holiness could seek the gratification of lawless passions. No friendly voice was near to warn me, and I fell.⁷⁴

Once in Utah, a far less mystical power kept women docile. The great difficulty of escape, and the brutality of retaliations against dissent, prevented women from voicing their opinions. As Ward put it, "The most, in fact the utmost, that a woman can do, is to conform to her circumstances, and be satisfied with her lot. Who would complain, when conscious that the complaint would only make matters worse?"⁷⁵ According to an anonymous plural wife of Brigham Young, one of Ward's most fruitful informants, wives were confined in cellars for revealing any information "that can have a tendency to bring the institution of polygamy into disrepute."⁷⁶ One wife threatened to run away if her husband brought home a second wife. He was not impressed: "No, madam, you won't [leave]. Among the Mormons, husbands are lords. They have the privilege of punishing disobedient wives, and enforcing their homage."⁷⁷ Ward even accused the Mormons of instituting their own version of the "Lynch law" of which "women were mostly the victims" for daring to "expose the weakness or sensuality of an elder." Wives were trapped in Utah, Ward claimed; her book was dedicated to publicizing their plight.⁷⁸

Ward also explained why men participated in the system. More explicitly than the other novelists, Ward attributed polygamy to men's

74. Smith, Ward claimed, then murdered the product of their union—his own child—and commanded Ellen to become the plural wife of another man, "who, to excessive boorishness of manner united a most repulsive countenance and forbidding disposition." *Ibid.*, 79. Ellen's suicide came as no surprise to Mrs. Ward, who accused Smith, "[w]hose fanaticism blighted the hopes of that pure spirit, degraded her aspirations for love and truth, and turned the sweetness of her life to gall and wormwood," of her murder. *Ibid.*, 80.

75. *Ibid.*, 421-22.

76. *Ibid.*, 314.

77. *Ibid.*, 90.

78. *Ibid.*, 313-14. Ward claimed to be reporting what was told to her by informants in Utah. For one theory of Ward's identity, see note 116 below.

natural "passion for variety."⁷⁹ The polygamous man's ability to countenance moral difference, anti-polygamists claimed, was deeply connected to their appetite for sexual variety—a gendered morality commonly subsumed (then as now) under the "sexual double standard" label.⁸⁰ The open acceptance, the legalization, of the double standard, anti-polygamists argued, spelled the end of all real affection, all respect for women. The same plural wife who revealed to Mrs. Ward the draconian punishments inflicted on dissenting wives, explained that her husband had no affection for her: "He is forever smitten with new faces; and that is the abomination of polygamy. Men are naturally inclined to variety, but habit, public opinion, everything, tends to restrain that inclination, in most communities. Among us, however, polygamy gratifies and encourages it."⁸¹

An equally pervasive theme was that greed—lust for money, for power, for women—was the primary motivation for men's conversion to Mormonism. In Metta Victor's *Mormon Wives*, for example, Margaret Wilde's faithless husband Richard abandoned his native soil in search of easy wealth. Attempting to persuade her to join him in converting to Mormonism and emigrating to Utah, Richard "painted their future success and prosperity in almost too glowing terms; for Margaret apprehended that his mind was more captivated by the projected splendor of their worldly enterprises, than by their religion."⁸²

Orvilla Belisle also claimed that Mormon converts were failed men. Mormonism welcomed with open arms those who enjoyed little respect at home; Belisle argued that these were the very people whose ability to convert to strange new religions should be circumscribed. Ward put Mormonism's appeal to outcasts in an unflattering light:

"The way of the truth is so plain," said [Joseph] Smith, "that a fool can point it out just as well as anybody. Let those who are considered fools by their neighbors and relations come to us—we will make them kings and priests. And certainly a multitude of fools accepted the invitation."⁸³

79. Ibid., 219.

80. Ibid., 428.

81. Ibid., 312.

82. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 103. The same was true for Arthur Guilford in Orvilla Belisle's *Mormonism Unveiled*; after losing an ill-conceived and poorly-run race for governor, Arthur fled to Mormonism as a means of recovering his lost wealth and self-esteem. Greed for money soon evolved into greed for women, as Mormon converts lost control over their sense of what was right. Once he left the East, Arthur careened downward morally. As Belisle put it, "the mark of Cain was already on his brow" as "he yielded a willing slave" to his own passions, finally killing his wife by his cruel treatment. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 136-37.

83. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 101.

Last but not least, Mormonism appealed to "thieves, cut-throats and swindlers," whose sins were forgiven by the Prophet, and whose conversion brought them "riches, honors, and all the wives [they] wish for in this world, and in the next, life everlasting."⁸⁴

Belisle made much of the popular theory that criminals were likely to convert to Mormonism, and that Mormon leaders sanctioned criminal behavior. Mormon men, she claimed, were "steeped in crime."⁸⁵ Mormon husbands were freed by their creed from the marital rules that protected women; and thus all other rules crumbled, too. They were not troubled by adultery or other misdeeds, Belisle claimed, because Mormon leaders assured that no crime could undermine the power of a Mormon baptism:

If you have murdered all your days, committed all the sins the devil could prompt you to commit, you would arise at the resurrection and your spirit be restored to your body, because you have received the baptism which cleanseth from sin. A Mormon can no more be lost than a [non-Mormon] unbaptized saved.⁸⁶

This theme of lawlessness and violence, of antinomianism as a prime consequence of moral diversity, was the special favorite of Alfreda Eva Bell, author of *Boadicea*.⁸⁷ A particularly gruesome scene dramatized the violence Bell argued was inherent in polygamy. Mary Maxwell, a plural wife of Bernard Yale (a name meant to evoke Brigham Young) was on the verge of giving birth when Yale caught up with her in the home of Boadicea, the heroine:

"Will you go with me?" asked he.

"No," answered the dying woman.

"Then you are done for," said Yale; and deliberately, before my very eyes, in spite of my wild screams for his mercy, he fired at

84. Ibid.

85. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 147.

86. Ibid., 149-50.

87. Bell also wrote an anti-slavery (and anti-Confederacy) novel in 1864. *The Rebel Cousins; or Life in Secession: The Autobiography of the Beautiful Bertha Stephens, the Accomplished Niece of the Hon. Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy. Written by Herself, and Prepared for Publication by Her Friend, Alfreda Eva Bell* (Philadelphia: Barclay, 1864). As the only scholarly discussion of Bell's two novels correctly points out, "Each book pretends to be based on fact, but neither is factual; each has a good deal of moralizing; each is filled with fantastic tales calculated to promote disgust and hatred of a way of life regarded as contrary to the accepted (New England) brand of Christianity." Arrington and Haupt, "Intolerable Zion," 249. It is not at all clear, however, that Bell was a native of New England, or that she was a Congregationalist. Indeed, the publication of her books by printers in Philadelphia and Baltimore, but not in Boston or Hartford, supports a mid-Atlantic residence and allegiance.

her, and scattered her brains over the floor. I fell down in a death-like swoon.⁸⁸

Boadicea herself was the victim of physical abuse by her husband's second wife, of poisoning, and even of an attempted assassination at a fancy dress ball. The assassin struck the "lovely Spanish wife" of Bernard Yale instead: "With a loud cry her partner dropped her, and she fell dead upon the floor of the ballroom—her brains spattering the garments of the women near her."⁸⁹ Boadicea was a survivor, however; disguised as a man, she escaped to tell her shocking tale in the East.

It is possible that Bell was a simple sensationalist—that the spattered brains of plural wives were designed to sell books, not to make any deeper point.⁹⁰ Certainly anti-polygamist authors were as likely as other writers to hope their books would be lucrative. But a profit motive, shared by authors dedicated to social reform as well as by authors whose work we are accustomed to take seriously as literature, need not be inconsistent with belief in the evils of the marital system equated with violence and immorality—at least in the mind of the writer. Even more to the point, curbing violence against wives was a ubiquitous, if subtle and often veiled, concern among sentimentalists.⁹¹ Violent abuse of the helpless in domestic settings achieved visibility in large measure through the description of the suffering of dependents, including wives and slaves, in unjust domestic orders.⁹² Anti-polygamists, by stressing the violence they believed was inherent in plural marriage, equated abuse with abusive social systems. In other words, anti-polygamists connected abuse by individuals with systems that failed to provide consistent restraints, that allowed liberty to degenerate into license.⁹³

88. Bell, *Boadicea*, 49.

89. *Ibid.*, 70.

90. This charge is routinely levelled against anti-polygamists. Karen Lynn, for example, argues in her analysis of anti-polygamy polemics that self-serving professions of sincerity by authors were unconvincing disclaimers of a more mercenary purpose: selling books. "Sensational Virtue," 110 n.8.

91. As Mary Ryan noted in her study of families in Oneida County in the mid-nineteenth century, "then, as now, wife beating was the most common crime." Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 148.

92. As Philip Fisher put it in his study of slavery and the sentimental novel, "[T]he weak and the helpless within society gain by means of sentimental experience full representation through the central moral category of compassion." *Hard Facts*, 95. On the popular theory that women were by nature empathic with all forms of suffering, see Clark, "'Sacred Rights of the Weak,'" 486.

93. The same intellectual maneuver occurred throughout reform fiction. In her temperance novel, for example, Metta Victor included a scene in which an otherwise mild and loving husband beat his wife in a drunken rage. Metta Victor, *The Senator's Son or The Maine Law: A Last Refuge; A Story Dedicated to the Law-Makers* (Cleveland: Tooker and Gatchel, 1853), 226-28.

In the work of Orvilla Belisle, the connection between sensuality, violence, and westward migration took on a nativist tinge. Ethnic difference was presumed to entail moral difference. Belisle wrote an anti-Catholic novel shortly before trying her hand at anti-polygamy fiction.⁹⁴ Both her anti-Catholic and her anti-polygamy fiction accused priests and Mormons of essentially the same litany of crimes: Rape, abduction, and murder of young women figure large in both books. Her nativism (which resurfaces at several points in *Mormonism Unveiled*) and her intolerance of religious beliefs that subordinated the interests of individual adherents to a complex and exclusively male hierarchy were common themes throughout sentimental literature.⁹⁵

Belisle, like many women authors of the 1850's, partook wholeheartedly in the widespread invocation of cultural and geographic manifest destiny that brought Utah territory under United States control in the first place. She had little tolerance for what were perceived as undemocratic departures from republican ideals disguised as religion.⁹⁶ Yet her work also explored the danger of absorbing potentially disruptive influences into the household or the nation. The foreign influence in marriage—the purported religion based on the degradation of women—was thus in some senses parallel to Belisle's fear of foreigners in Philadelphia, whose customs (and religions) threatened the well-being of women. Especially in marriage, secrecy, duplicity, and variety (as opposed to trust, constancy, and exclusivity) were at war with the interests of wives, and with the interests of patriotism.

The relationship in anti-polygamy fiction between conversion to Mormonism, westward migration, and cupidity was a subtle and pervasive one, laced with class as well as nativist anxieties. Anti-polygamy authors drew a sharp distinction between the husbands (however faithless) of their heroines, and run-of-the-mill Mormon

94. Belisle, *The Arch Bishop*. This is the only edition listed in the National Union Catalogue. The book was copyrighted by Orvilla Belisle in 1854, however, and William White Smith, the publisher, styled this as the "fourth edition," indicating that the book was probably published before Belisle's anti-polygamy novel.

95. As David Brion Davis pointed out some thirty years ago in a study of anti-Masonic, anti-Catholic, and anti-Mormon literature, nativist writers of all stripes expressed profound fear of subversion of liberty, individuality, and prosperity at the hands of single-minded fanatics. In their defense of unsullied Americanism, nativist authors not only contributed to a sense of national identity and purpose, they also took on some of the very traits they sought to exclude from American soil. As Davis argues, nativists ultimately advocated curtailing liberty for the sake of liberty, an awkward position philosophically, even if libertarianism as a critique of restraint was not part of the intellectual landscape in the nineteenth century. Davis, "Themes of Counter-Subversion," 205, 222.

96. Maria Ward drew an explicit connection between Catholicism and Mormonism: "The church government of the Mormons resembles that of the Catholic hierarchy, in many respects. Smith, while he lived, was pope." Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 99.

recruits. Orvilla Belisle was especially straightforward in her depiction of the lower-class elements of Mormonism and her heroine's distaste for their vulgarity and levelling tendencies: "[Margaret's] only hope now was, that [her husband Arthur's] refined education and early associations would revolt in disgust against the ignorant, vulgar mass of humanity admitted in [Mormonism's] pale; but in this, too, she was disappointed, and, to her consternation, her high-born, elegant refined husband became also an adherent of the Prophet."⁹⁷ Once removed from the "most intellectual and refined circles" of the East, where his moral weakness was restrained by civilization, Arthur succumbed to the "mystic vapors" and foreign vulgarity of Mormonism.⁹⁸

In part because the familiar restraints of class structure were removed in the West, Mormonism ensnared those men who wished to rise above their origins. But the real danger, which was apparent from the beginning to both Margarets (that is, the heroines of *Mormon Wives* and *Mormonism Unveiled*), was that instead of raising themselves in the world, Mormons would in fact drag everyone down to their level. Belisle even accused Joseph Smith of being motivated by a "levelling" desire.⁹⁹ In this sense, moral diversity was portrayed as an attack on the class system, a redistributive force that threatened vital structures of economic difference, structures which, anti-polygamists claimed, were essential to the well-being of all. The potential contradictions in this argument, the claim that inequality would be increased by the failure to observe the structures of inequality already in place, were deeply embedded in fears of mobility in economic, as well as geographic, terms. The defense of class structure as the best protection for all levels of society, of course, is deeply conservative at its core. Economic (and geographic) mobility might not look so threatening to the masses Belisle claimed made up the bulk of converts to Mormonism.¹⁰⁰

Anti-polygamy writing, and sentimental writing in general, was infused with an impassioned defense of the middle ground. Extremes of wealth and poverty were anathema to these women. Not only were native-born Americans who converted to Mormonism likely to aspire to more wealth than was good for them in these novels, but

97. Ward, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 65-66.

98. *Ibid.*, 105.

99. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 65-66, 70. In a similar vein, Metta Victor claimed that men were more likely to convert to Mormonism from greed than because of any spiritual aspect of the faith. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 103, 109.

100. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 65-70. For a contemporary argument that Mormonism (and polygamy) were motivated by rejection of the class structures produced by capitalism, see Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 202-36.

even more ominously, foreigners, especially the English poor—recruited in the slums of Liverpool and Birmingham with promises of great riches for little labor—came to Utah in droves, swelling the ranks of uneducated and undemocratic Mormonism.¹⁰¹ As Belisle put it, sounding a theme that resonated in much of anti-polygamy fiction, “[immigrants] with no other naturalization than that of a Mormon baptism, being permitted to vote, . . . were even admitted into the Legislative body to make laws to govern free-born Americans.”¹⁰² Metta Victor, in an appendix to *Mormon Wives* that quoted newspaper articles, drove home the point that Mormonism threatened to pollute the entire nation.¹⁰³ She included the following description of a boat-load of immigrants newly arrived from Liverpool:

They all belong to the lower, almost to the lowest classes of society. Their countenances were imbrued with ignorance and dirt—not the material dirt of a sea voyage, but the moral dirt of a life of imbecility and indolence. The Apostles of Joe Smith and Brigham Young found them an easy prey, although, as our reporter was told, they were quite above the average of Mormon respectability.¹⁰⁴

This sentimental culture of class at mid-century was sustained not only by the contempt of women like Metta Victor for both wealthy and impoverished Mormon converts, but also by their veneration of the material trappings of middle-class wifehood. Victor's heroine, for example, uncorrupted by the influences of “fashion,” was married in a dress she made herself, of simple white lawn, scented only with rose petals. No French perfumes or frills detracted from Margaret's purity of body and soul, yet nothing in Margaret's appearance or demeanor conveyed a sense of want or penury. Through these details of appearance and housekeeping—tablecloths were always “snowy white,” food simple but flavorful, gardens orderly and

101. This theme is repeated several times in Cornelia Ferris's “Life Among the Mormons,” as well as in book-length treatments:

[An Englishwoman from Bath] went on to narrate, in a simple artless way, how happily she and her husband had lived together—how they were anxious to emigrate to this country—how they had been told that the valley of Salt Lake was a paradise, that her husband could have land for nothing, and earn \$5 a day—how their expenses had been defrayed by the Mormon agents, to be refunded by her husband's labor here on public works. And then, with tears streaming down her face, she said her husband, about three months since, had been persuaded to marry another wife, and how badly she felt when she first heard of his resolution.

Ferris, “Life Among the Mormons,” 378-79.

102. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 233.

103. Ward, *Mormon Wives*, 321-26.

104. *Ibid.*, 323. Victor attributes the quote to a report in the *New York Times*, “of a late date.”

blooming—sentimental authors conveyed a gendered class message to their readers.¹⁰⁵

This celebration of the economic middle ground as the special purview of wives was threatened directly and immediately, anti-polygamists were convinced, by plural marriage. The inevitable consequence would be the division of society into rich and poor, with a few men enjoying great luxury at the expense of all women and most men. Orvilla Belisle made the connection between polygamy and stark class divisions explicit:

[In Utah] with thirty thousand subjects, [Brigham Young] reigned supreme autocrat, holding the wealth, labor, liberty and lives of his followers at his own mercy, which was swayed by the passions that held him in bondage, and whose slave he had become. The infatuation of his subjects could not hide from them the imposition and enormities of their leader; and the burdens cast upon the labourers, to wring from them the means to support the largely stocked harems were more than they could bear.¹⁰⁶

Ironically, then, in anti-polygamy fiction, converts lured by promises of wealth and social prominence under Mormonism were themselves exploited and impoverished by the polygamous Mormon elite.

The division of society into a pampered and much-married male aristocracy at one end, and oppressed wives and poor men at the other, combined with the licentiousness and violence of plural husbands and the death of those wronged by an abusive social and sexual system, all point to a connection that anti-polygamist authors drew early and often—polygamy, they argued, was a form of slavery. Both systems, they claimed, were based on uncontrolled male sensuality and the betrayal of wives, and both were fundamentally contrary to the redemptive potential of female-centered morality. Alfreda Bell, for example, describing the lot of women in Utah, claimed that “they are in fact white slaves; are required to do all the most servile drudgery; are painfully impressed with their nothingness and utter inferiority, in divers ways and at all seasons; and are frequently . . . subjected to personal violence and various modes of corporeal punishment.”¹⁰⁷ Like southern slaveholders, Bell argued, Mormon men bought and sold women—even their own daughters—and were “to the last degree demoralized, effeminate, and

105. Margaret's wedding trousseau and simply furnished room were described in *Mormon Wives*, 25-26. In *Mormonism Unveiled*, Belisle described the housekeeping talents of the pure woman: “The cloth was white as snow, the equipments plain, but well arranged, and the viands, plucked fresh from the garden, were delicious and inviting.” Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 100.

106. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 230-31.

107. Bell, *Boadicea*, 54.

lazy."¹⁰⁸ Maria Ward maintained that surveillance in Utah was fully as "cruel and remorseless" as the "bloodhounds" who tracked "runaway slave[s]."¹⁰⁹ Accusing men of succumbing to demoralized indolence through indulgence of their passions, novelists told of seeing Joseph Smith "sitting lazily on the door-stone, basking in the sun, while [two of his wives] were at work in the neighboring corn field."¹¹⁰

The connection between the enslavement of women in polygamy, the tyranny of Mormon men, and general social regression was a constant theme. Plural marriage, argued the anti-polygamy novelists, was a return to barbarism, a step backwards for women, and thus a threat to the stability and freedom of the entire nation.¹¹¹ Like slavery, polygamy could not be tolerated in a civilized country. Metta Victor, in the introduction to the second edition of *Mormon Wives*, highlighted the connections between polygamy, slavery, and intemperance as threats to national survival:

Repulsive as slavery appears to us, we can but deem polygamy a thing more loathsome and poisonous to social and political purity. Half-civilized States have ceased its practice as dangerous to happiness, and as outraging every instinct of the better nature within every breast; and as ages rolled away they left the institution behind as one of the relics of barbarism which marked the half-developed state of man as a social being. . . . [A]s citizens of this country, we owe it as a duty, not only to the Constitution, but to humanity, that we sternly oppose slavery in all its forms—intemperance and its hideous deformities, and polygamy with its train of evils which no man can truly conceive, but which surely will end in animalizing man, in corrupting the very founts of virtue and purity, and, finally, in barbarism.¹¹²

108. Ibid., 34. Bell also described a callous father who sold his daughter to a Mormon elder. The girl was beaten to death after she refused to become the elder's plural wife:

"But then you've cheated me," answered old Boissrouge; "it is not so much la fille, se girl hercel; it is mine monish, mine monish, vat you did promish me for her, if I did try for make her be our vife; vat you did promish me, scelerat!"

"None of that eternal gibberish," answered Holmes. "I don't like it, and I won't stand it,—no, I won't. She's dead, and I'm sorry for it; but a bargain's a bargain. I bargained for a live girl, and not a dead girl, Boissrouge!"

Ibid., 91. The "gibberish," of course, the broken and accented English, lent further ammunition to the claim that foreigners were less virtuous than native-born Americans—that they would even sell their own daughters and beat them to death if they refused to be treated as human property. Thanks to Laura Dickinson for this insight.

109. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 438.

110. Ibid.

111. On anti-slavery activists' critique of slavery as the indulgence of slaveholders' sexual passions, see Ronald G. Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 177-201.

112. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, vi-viii.

Slavery and polygamy—"animality," as Victor put it—were only possible where society was "uncivilized," where men could make marriage laws to suit themselves, without the restraints of Christian custom and the Constitution.

As in abolitionist literature, the role of the West, of the territories in the perpetuation and spread of polygamy, was a constant concern for these authors. The sectionalism of much of anti-polygamy rhetoric is especially evident in the work of Maria Ward:

[Once in the West, the Mormons] were at liberty to form such laws as suited them, to establish precedents and decisions, conformable to their own views; and, above all, the utter impossibility of escape or appeal, exercised a wonderful influence over the dissatisfied, and aided, more than anything else, in causing them to abide by their fate, and conform to the circumstances in which they were placed. Had injured wives possessed the chance of redress by law, or even the opportunity of flying from the scene of such licentious habits, polygamy, even in its infancy, would have received a death-blow; but these, the ones most interested in its suppression, and upon whom fell the burdens of its intolerable evils, were constrained to abide by it, and, in most cases, without murmur or complaint.¹¹³

The male world of the western frontier, outside the female-controlled environment of the East, was portrayed as an especially dangerous place for morality, for stable class structure, and, dearest of all to anti-polygamy authors, for women. The farther they travelled from the eastern seaboard, the more likely men were to lose sound judgment about matters of marriage. Arthur Guildford in *Mormonism Unveiled*, for example, began to decline in Nauvoo, but his freefall from grace only occurred once he had arrived in Utah. The farther the wagon train travelled, the more precarious the position of women,

113. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 294-95.

until finally in Utah, their enslavement was revealed in all its horror.¹¹⁴

Clearly, anti-polygamy authors were ambivalent about the role and value of the West in American culture and politics. None of the novelists explicitly condemned the expansionism that brought Utah under the jurisdiction of the United States in the first place, but they were all deeply concerned with the maintenance of order and civilization—of marriage, even in areas of new settlement. Most disturbing was the absence of an established legal system, under which wives would be protected from the depredations of their husbands. As in abolitionist polemics, it was the inability of victims (be they slaves or plural wives) to seek the protection of the law that was especially galling. The lack of an enforcement mechanism to restrain male sensuality and violence, transformed wives into slaves.

The negative consequences of polygamy and slavery made for a more dramatic, but also a more easily distanced, explanation of the physical abuse of wives by husbands. Of course, the flip side of an argument that polygamy encouraged domestic violence was the presumption that monogamy promoted domestic peace. Herein lies an essential nub of all anti-polygamy fiction (and of sentimental reform fiction generally); by dramatizing the evils of polygamy, anti-polygamist authors validated monogamous marriage, basing their approval on the premise that women were the natural leaders (if not the titular heads) of monogamous households. At the same time, anti-polygamist women indirectly condemned all violence against women, and all unhappy marriages.

The formulaic qualities of anti-polygamy fiction thus have an indisputably political basis; there was method to the sameness. Several common features gave coherence to the sentiment-to-activism progression. Predictable patterns, the inevitability of "murders, seductions, thefts and all manner of iniquity" in a polygamous society, are precisely what made anti-polygamy novels so persuasive.¹¹⁵ Like the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction,

114. On the overlap between westward migration and the perception of moral degradation among man, see Degler, *At Odds*, 110-12. On the other hand, Orvilla Belisle, although she labelled the Mormon settlement in the West a "modern Sodom," was quick to distance the Mormon character from western Americans in general:

The western borderer may not be able to compete with their eastern brothers in the code of etiquette which hems them in, until it is impossible to see a glance of their real natures peeking out, but he can, and does excel in the keen perception of what is, and what is *not*, honorable and manly. Generous, brave, and possessed of indomitable energy—he forgets and forgives conditionally; firstly, that no such wrongs again occur—secondly, that those who have outraged justice leave the district to ensure obedience to the first condition.

Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 132. In this view, westerners were for the most part admirable, perhaps even superior, to their more polished eastern countrymen at recognizing and punishing transgressions of the natural order of things.

115. Bell, *Boadicea*, 82.

stereotypicality was a hallmark of emotional realism, for author and reader alike. Recognizable characters and predictable plots were what made suffering in anti-polygamy fiction emotionally effective for readers.¹¹⁶ And if suffering was the essential precondition of empathic identification with women in Utah, the right of the sufferer to challenge the authority of the tyrant, to assert her rights as a wife, an individual with legal personhood, was the prerequisite for anti-polygamy activism.¹¹⁷ They invoked the legal system for protection.

IV. "THOSE WHO MADE THEIR OWN LAWS TO SUIT THEIR OWN PURPOSES": THE LEGAL VISION OF ANTI-POLYGAMY FICTION

Metta Victor made no bones about what she thought was wrong with Utah: Legal power had been vested in "those who made their own laws to suit their own purposes, who brought strange doctrines

116. The seamlessness of the depiction of Mormons in a variety of literary formats is not surprising in an age when events were sensationalized in narrative form in political speeches, newspapers, trials, and even sermons. The identifiability or style of a given author was far less instrumental in determining the persuasive power of an anti-polygamy novel than the recognizability of its characters.

By far the most popular of all anti-polygamy novels, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, first published in 1855, was issued in its first editions anonymously "by the wife of a Mormon elder." David S. Reynolds, "From Doctrine to Narrative: The Rise of Pulpit Storytelling in America," *American Quarterly* 32 (1980): 479-98. The book was subsequently attributed to the pseudonym "Maria Ward." Several sources attribute the authorship of *Female Life Among the Mormons* to Cornelia Ferris, who spent six months in Utah in the early 1850's, when her husband was appointed territorial secretary. The Ferrises fled to California, claiming that Mormons in Utah had threatened them in retaliation for their opposition to polygamy. Joseph Sabin confidently states that Mrs. Ferris is the author, and that later works by the same author have been omitted because they were published after the time period addressed by the bibliography. *Biblioteca Americana: A Dictionary of Books Relating to America from its Discovery to the Present Time*, 29 vols. (New York: Southworth-Anthoensen Press 1936), 27:319. Neither Sabin nor any of his successors give any documentation for their assertion, nor even any reason for assuming that Maria Ward and Mrs. Benjamin Ferris are one and the same. The only obvious justification for the assumption is the similarity of the titles of the book and an article by Ferris that appeared in serial form in several issues of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. Cornelia Ferris, "Life Among the Mormons," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art* 6 (1855): 144, 262, 376, 501, 602. Written ostensibly as letters to the magazine from Utah in 1853, the article is unsigned, but is indisputably from the pen of Mrs. Ferris, given that the author several times refers to Mr. Ferris as her husband. The National Union Catalog, however, lists only one book by Ferris, *The Mormons at Home, With Some Incidents of Travel from Missouri to California*, 1852-3 (1856; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971), an account of her experiences in Utah published originally in 1856. The very elusiveness of the author may help explain why *Female Life Among the Mormons* was so adept at both reflecting and refracting public opinion. The stories sounded true, whether or not there was a factual basis for the drama. They were expressions of what all "right-thinking" women would feel, were they faced with the horrors of plural marriage. The indeterminacy of Maria Ward's identity is thus not an argument for her social and literary irrelevance: Her achievement was based on an ability to merge her message with the prevailing cultural and political climate, rather than to assert her individuality and nonconformity. Her work was accessible—and available—to an audience of many thousands.

117. As she put it, her own "sense of duty to the world" impelled her to prepare her "narrative for the public eye," revealing the "evils and horrors and abominations of the Mormon system, the degradation it imposes on females, and the consequent vices which extend through all the ramifications of the society." Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, iii-iv.

out of the depths of their own foul imaginations and called them revelations."¹¹⁸ The legal definition of marriage was the root of the problem, and the power to redefine marriage in the interests of women was the solution. In part, the corruption of law had been achieved by toleration of moral diversity based on geographic distance, in part by the domination of statecraft in Utah by the priesthood, and in part, of course, by self-deception mixed with outright fraud. Anti-polygamy novelists understood that polygamy had a legal foundation (or at least made strong claims to legality that resonated with the moral diversity underlying the federal system), and would require positive legal action to destroy.

This realization brings us directly to the issue that was to dominate the history of anti-polygamy over the next four decades: the role of legislation, and its enforcement in the court system, in bringing what most Americans considered a barbaric social system into line with the rest of the country. The anti-polygamist authors of the 1850's advocated stringent federal oversight of territorial lands, clear and readily enforceable laws, and unequivocal punishment of wrongdoers, all to protect women from the corruption of marriage, the degradation of polygamy.¹¹⁹

The legal consciousness of these authors, the understanding that laws were needed to protect wives from husbands who indulged their inclination to "variety," pervades the novels of the 1850's. It would be an exaggeration, however, to assert that anti-polygamist authors had a detailed understanding of how federal enforcement of anti-polygamy legislation would or could be carried out. Theirs was, as a scholar of anti-slavery literature has pointed out, "a lay, rather than a legal, tradition, fluid precisely because it did not depend on the revealed word of a statute or constitutional amendment."¹²⁰ What anti-polygamist novelists were interested in exploring at length and in depth was the nature of power within marriage, and the relationship between marital structure and legal structure.

Anti-polygamist authors were passionate students of injustice, dedicated analysts of the consequences of unequal distribution of power between husbands and wives. By changing the rules and tinkering with the law of marriage, anti-polygamist novelists charged, Mormons had opened Pandora's box. Even under the best of circumstances, these authors implied, marriage was a sacrifice of the self, a voluntary assumption of subordination as a necessary pre-

118. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 198.

119. On the role of anti-polygamy legislation in the national government, see Gordon, "The Twin Relic of Barbarism," 104-256.

120. Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak," 487.

requisite to the creation of a new "hearthstone" through wifely dependence.¹²¹ The final extinguishing of wives' selves, the betrayal of women's sacrifice of self, by exploitation of the weakness of the protective law of monogamy, was the central crime of Mormonism, charged anti-polygamists, for which women in Utah had no legal remedy. The only immediate solution to the problem of plural marriage was death or dissolution through escape. The long-term solution, however, and the one that was championed more or less openly in all of the novels, was legal reform for the protection of women. Only by forcibly preventing men from indulging their baser proclivities could women assume their rightful place in society, sentimental authors argued. This trust in the power of the state to control men ran deep in anti-polygamists' veins.¹²²

Anti-polygamists believed deeply that the absence of laws, the fact that women had no "redress by law," as Maria Ward put it, was the linchpin in the perpetuation of polygamy. Mormons, claimed Ward, had escaped the ambit of the "laws of the land." This antinomian potential reached its most dangerous manifestation in a statement attributed to Brigham Young, who bragged to a beautiful young woman of his total power over her, power to make whatever laws he wished:

"Laws of the land! now that is too good—laws of the land! indeed, what laws of the land are there, but my will? what State? what government has power or authority? No! my beauty, set your heart at rest in that quarter. Here I do as I please with my own. I consider myself amenable to no law, but the code of Mormon, and that places all authority in my hands."¹²³

In anti-polygamy legalism, the notion that law could be created by one man for his own benefit, that the sovereign could not step in to

121. The clearest example of the delicate balance between womanly superiority and the gracious act of womanly subordination in wifehood, is found in Metta Victor's *Mormon Wives*. The heroine counseled her (soon to be proven faithless) friend that someday she would meet a man "whom you cannot help obeying." Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 29. On coverture, see Hendrik Hartog, "Abigail Bailey's Coverture: Law in a Married Woman's Consciousness," in Austin Sarat and Thomas F. Kearns, eds., *Law in Everyday Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 63-108.

122. Metta Victor, for example, believed that when positive legislation to protect wives was in place, behavior would actually change. In her temperance novel, she pleaded for enactment of the Maine Law in all states, arguing that human nature alone could not accomplish the reform of society. "As long as men must be governed, let them have as many laws as are necessary and just. If this was the millennium [*sic*] reign of love, when the lion and the lamb are to lie down together, we should not need those restrictions. Now they are wholesome, necessary and wise." Victor, *The Senator's Son*, 44.

123. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 292.

protect women from abuse, meant not only that all women were at risk in Utah, but that law itself could not survive.

It was only a small step from the lawless abuse of wives, anti-polygamists believed, to loss of respect for all law. Orvilla Belisle, for example, claimed that Mormons stole grain, horses, and merchandise as readily as they did daughters and sisters.¹²⁴ Rape, kidnapping, and even murder were sanctioned by Mormonism, Belisle maintained.¹²⁵ All because Mormons had attempted to separate vice from crime, by calling a virtue what everyone knew to be a sin, they had started down the slippery slope to utter lawlessness, even while preserving a veneer of order. Right-thinking women, Belisle argued, even those who were thrust into the midst of Mormondom, knew the true nature of plural marriage, despite whatever specious arguments its proponents might advance. Polygamy was, plain and simple, a crime, but one that was going unpunished daily in Utah. Belisle's heroine Margaret Guilford raised in the tender bosom of civilization, recognized immediately the fundamental falsity of Mormon claims to be law-abiding citizens. "She knew vice under no other name than crime, every grade of which she had been taught to abhor and call by its right name, lest in softening it she apologized for the act by misnaming the criminal."¹²⁶

The connection between abuse of women and crime was played more than one way. Not only did anti-polygamy authors compare the moral effects of polygamy to those of slavery, they also clearly understood the political and legal similarities between the South's defense of its peculiar domestic institution, and the defense of the institution of polygamy in Utah. Orvilla Belisle described a Mormon missionary attempting to seduce a virtuous young English girl. When the young woman demurred on the ground that polygamy was illegal,

124. Belisle, it should be noted, was no advocate of scrupulous adherence to the letter of the law, especially where the British, Mormons, or Catholics were concerned. Her description of anti-Mormon riots reveals her own predilections: "I am no apologist for lynch or mob law, but there have occasions occurred, and may again, when the people have arisen in their might and bade the tyrant's vice and oppression begone. So they did at Lexington and New Orleans, and so they did at Philadelphia in 1844, and so they were doing in Missouri now." *Mormonism Unveiled*, 132-33.

125. The "Danites," or "Sons of Dan," were, according to many anti-polygamists, a group of Mormon vigilantes who hunted down and brutally murdered both non-Mormons and Mormons who dared to stray from the path of strict obedience to the leadership. The role of the Danites, and whether their activities were supported by church officials, remains a topic of debate among Mormon historians. See, e.g., Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 57-58; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 54, 353 n.45; Leland H. Gentry, "The Danite Band of 1838," *Brigham Young University Studies* 14 (summer 1974): 421-50.

126. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 95.

the missionary hastened to explain that in America there was no such thing as a uniform legal code:

"The Union is made up of distinct States, which make the laws that govern their own territory; and whatever laws the people of any one State construct for their own government, the other States have no right to interfere with; therefore, it is not necessary for the whole Union to give their assent to any custom to make it legal, or to have custom sanction it; if one State sanctions it within her territory, it is both legal and right."¹²⁷

This is a reprise (and targeted critique) of the territorial sovereignty argument current among many Democrats in the 1850's. It was a familiar attempt by self-styled pragmatists to remove slavery from debate at the national level.¹²⁸ Territorial (and even state) sovereignty in matters of moral welfare was anathema to anti-polygamists, of course, just as it was to abolitionists. Metta Victor even argued that such "squatter sovereignty" was contrary to the fundamental constitutional design of the Union:

Reject [polygamy], and we accomplish the first step in a reform which shall restore our country to its once proud purity, and give to it a new character for moral and intellectual grandeur. Under its laws we ought to be the best, the purest, the wisest, the bravest people on earth; and this we shall be are we but true to the first principles laid down by our Revolutionary fathers—the nobility of man. Whatever degrades him—whatever corrupts and injures his moral, intellectual, and physical well-being is inimical to the well-being of society, to the State, to the whole country; consequently, to the spirit and intent of that Constitution which is to perpetuate the republic, and render it, in truth, the refuge for the oppressed, the *home* of liberty.¹²⁹

To Victor and her fellow anti-polygamist novelists, as well as to sentimental thinkers generally, the government had no business sanctioning immorality and antinomianism in the name of localism. On the contrary, argued Victor, legislators had a positive duty to enforce the morality that was the bedrock of the Constitution. It was an easy transition from a claim that the federal government should not remain passive in the face of moral transgression to a claim that government must actively promote and enforce the morality of all its citizens.

127. Ibid., 91-92.

128. The most well-known proponent of territorial sovereignty, of course, was Stephen Douglas. For a concise summary of the theory of territorial sovereignty, see Stephen Douglas, "The Dividing Line between Federal and Local Authority: Popular Sovereignty in the Territories," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 19 (1859): 519.

129. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, vii-viii.

The connection to slavery also provided a blueprint for constitutional-rights consciousness,¹³⁰ for the theory that marriage—the legal relationship that both “defined private obligations and mediated the distribution of public power”¹³¹—was not only constitutive of human happiness, but of the Constitution itself.¹³² The right to emotional fulfillment, conceived in Metta Victor’s words as “the spirit and intent of th[e] Constitution,”¹³³ was integral to the claim that polygamy entailed an illegitimate exercise of authority. Victor argued that to be constitutional, public power, whether actively promoted or merely condoned, must be exercised only in ways that respected the governance of the household as the legitimate “home of liberty.”¹³⁴ Any other structure would violate the essential constitutional design, the commitment to create a refuge from oppression.

The construction of Mormon polygamy as not just unconstitutional, but anti-constitutional, resonates with the emotive power of sentimentalism. Constitutional-rights rhetoric of this vein (the argument that a legal form of power was illegitimate because without constitutional foundation) implied “destabilization,” as one scholar put it, “of the settled rights of those who oppressed [women in marriage].”¹³⁵ The logic of this constitutionalism, like the logic of sentimentalism, rests on a theory that human emotions and constitutional rights are constant over time and across space. Conversely, this logic dictates that oppressive structures of authority (such as polygamy and slavery) are contingent, subject to destruction by governmental forces that owe a positive obligation to protect constitutional rights and rights-bearers. In this sense, anti-polygamy sentimentalists made heavy demands on the state for enforcement and for protection. They also implied that anything less would be a betrayal of the constitutional order,

130. Thanks to Laura Appleman for suggesting this connection.

131. Laura F. Edwards, “The Marriage Covenant is at the foundation of all Our Rights’: The Politics of Slave Marriages in North Carolina after Emancipation,” *Law and History Review* 14 (spring 1996): 81, 82.

132. On the importance of constitutional consciousness in American history, and for an argument that constitutional theory is produced as much by extra-judicial (even extra-legal) actors as by authoritative pronouncements by the Supreme Court, see Hendrik Hartog, “The Constitution of Aspiration and ‘The Rights That Belong to Us All,’” *Journal of American History* 74 (December 1987): 353-74. For an exploration of the imaginative space occupied by the Constitution in the early Republic, see John M. Murrin, “‘A Roof Without Walls’: The Dilemma of American National Identity” in Richard Beeman, Stephen Boten, and Edward C. Carter II, eds., *Beyond Confession: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Williamsburg, Va.: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1987), 333-48.

133. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, viii.

134. Ibid. (emphasis in original)

135. Hartog, “Constitution of Aspiration,” 362.

delegitimizing not only Mormon polygamy but also the broader government that failed to intervene.¹³⁶

Anti-polygamist writers also reframed the traditional condemnation of Mormon theocracy in terms of the consequences of the political power of the Mormon priesthood for women. As a lecherous old man, who had just concluded the purchase of two beautiful young women from their greedy father explained: "Polygamy, as I take it, is the legitimate offspring of the union of Church and State. The Church is more careful and tender of the interests of believers, than the State, when divorced from her, could ever be."¹³⁷ Plural marriage, he claimed, was "the chiefest of our blessings, and that will be what the heathen will attempt to root out and destroy."¹³⁸

The presumed evil flowing from an established church was still a relatively unsettled issue throughout most of the states in the mid-nineteenth century. Massachusetts was the last to formally disestablish in 1833, but considerable confusion about the relationship of church and state was still apparent. Several years after disestablishment, for example, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court sustained a blasphemy conviction.¹³⁹ The use of the coercive powers of the state on behalf of explicitly religious interests was still a relatively common occurrence. In one sense, therefore, anti-Mormonism was a unique and convenient forum for separationist sentiment to be formed and expressed. In Utah, the purported evils of an established church were easily spotted, especially in Mormons' religiously-based legal claim to practice the barbaric institution of "celestial marriage." Anti-polygamist authors argued that polygamy could flourish only in a theocracy.

The advocacy of strict separation of church and state thus became an additional weapon in the sentimental arsenal, the legal application of the political belief in women as the core of spirituality. If the informal, home-based religion of individual wives was the true source

136. Hartog made this point in terms of the culture of constitutional rights generally, but the analysis applies equally well to sentimental constitutionalism:

[T]he notion that the constitutional order must legitimate itself by recognizing a particular right may suggest a strikingly tentative and contingent commitment to the American constitutional arena. Such demands imply a threat: If you (the state, the courts, the Department of Labor) don't do this one thing, then we (women, minorities, religious deviationists) will have learned the foolishness of identifying personal aspirations with constitutional rights. They imply the threat of withdrawal and of a loss of constitutional faith.

"Constitution of Aspiration," 365.

137. Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 325.

138. Ibid.

139. *Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, 37 Mass. 206 (1838). See also Leonard W. Levy, ed., *Blasphemy in Massachusetts: Freedom of Conscience and the Abner Kneeland Case* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973).

of faith and virtue (and their sacrifice of independence the key link to moral growth and ultimately to salvation), this argument went, then any overtly political (and therefore male) institutionalization of religion was in fact the degradation of religion, and, not surprisingly, of women. This religious corollary to the sentimental vision of marriage, according to which women as wives had primary jurisdiction over whatever affected the marital relationship and the family homestead, also contains interesting seeds of anti-statism in a philosophy that was otherwise profoundly committed to state intervention on behalf of women. Only certain kinds of state actors, those who came to their posts without any explicit clerical affiliation, were qualified to legislate the protection of women.¹⁴⁰

Utah, in this view, was not only overgoverned (by the interventionist Mormon priesthood), but also undergoverned (by the absence of laws on the books).¹⁴¹ The simultaneous existence of theocracy and anarchy was comprehensible in anti-polygamists' eyes. Mormonism, they charged, which placed priests in charge of legislatures and households, had gotten the source of morally valid government wrong.¹⁴² By undermining the distinctions between church and state, and between church and home, Mormons jeopardized all three. The condemnation of Mormon lawlessness, anti-constitutionalism, and theocracy simultaneously posited a contrast between the plight of women in Utah and the protection of women in the East. By arguing that wives were not sufficiently valued in Mormonism, anti-polygamists indirectly claimed that married women were better protected in states and territories that outlawed polygamy. Implicit in anti-polygamist authors' portrayal of the pain inflicted by the sexual infidelities of polygamous husbands, in other words, was the message to readers that adultery was less frequent where monogamy was the only lawful form of marriage.

To meet the demands of anti-polygamists, congressmen had only to impose on Mormons the same standards they themselves aspired to. This was a far easier pill to swallow than the claims of radical abolitionist women that marriage—even the monogamous marriage of the States—was a form of enslavement for women. Angelina Grimke, for example, claimed that her investigation of the disabilities

140. As a Mormon leader in Maria Ward's novel put it, polygamy could only be protected by a legal order in which priests made laws: "Mormonism can only flourish as a theocracy; but so long as the head of the church makes the laws we are safe." Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, 325.

141. I owe the insight of this contrast between under- and overgovernment to Daniel Rodgers.

142. Orvilla Belisle, for example, condemned Mormon legislation as dictated by a priesthood made up of foreigners, rather than a duly elected American legislature. Ward, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 233.

of the slave had led her to the realization that women endured many of the same handicaps and suffered from a similar invisibility, politically and legally.¹⁴³ Woman's rights advocates in the 1850's, like anti-polygamists, thus drew inspiration from abolitionism.¹⁴⁴ But anti-polygamists argued that traditional marriage (and traditional marriage laws, especially those that mandated monogamy) protected and advanced women, even as their more radical counterparts rejected the same cadre of existing social and legal practices as part and parcel of the enslavement of women. Indeed, anti-polygamy writers' confidence that legislation mandating monogamy would ensure the implementation of their sentimental agenda of emotional fulfillment and respect for women in marriage was as naive as it was appealing.¹⁴⁵

Anti-polygamists deployed their legal arsenal in the interests of the sentimental formula for marriage. Indeed, anti-polygamy may well have been the single most successful nineteenth-century political and legal reform campaign. Congress enacted ever more stringent laws against polygamy during and after the Civil War, eventually even confiscating most of the property owned by the Mormon church. Between 1862 and 1890, polygamist marriages were outlawed; polygamists were disenfranchised and excluded from jury service; and "unlawful cohabitation" was criminalized. In 1887, the church corporation was itself abolished, and most of its property escheated.

143. Angelina Emily Grimke, *Letters to Catharine Beecher* (Boston, 1836), quoted in Alice S. Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 320.

144. See generally Blanche Glassman Hersch, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

145. The limitations of reform legislation were amply demonstrated by the failures of antebellum prohibition, including the so-called Maine Law that was enacted in several states, for which Metta Victor was a prominent advocate. Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 290-315. But temperance activists, temporarily set back after the failure of Maine Laws, reemerged in the early 1870's with new vigor. The "moral eye of the state," as one historian put it, was focused on issues of concern to women. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 174. Temperance became by and large a woman's issue, a matter, as Frances Willard claimed, of "home protection" through legislation. Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance*, 2d ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard, a Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 10, 110, 129; Elizabeth Batelle Clark, "The Politics of God and the Women's Vote: Religion in the American Suffrage Movement, 1848-1895" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1989). Given the right laws, anti-polygamists and their fellow travellers believed, they could reform behavior. "Calling in the giant" to police formerly private relationships of power was a favorite technique of rights theorists in the Civil War era—be they anti-polygamists, woman's rights advocates, abolitionists, or temperance activists. For an analysis of the redistribution of power achieved by such claims, and the theory that underlies them, see Clark, "Sacred Rights of the Weak," 489-90. See also Hartog, "Constitution of Aspiration," 1013.

The church finally capitulated in 1890.¹⁴⁶ Alcohol, pornography, domestic violence, prostitution, poverty, and a host of other ills still plague us today. Yet claims for the legality of polygamy have, for most intents and purposes, been eradicated.¹⁴⁷

How did anti-polygamists achieve such persuasiveness? Part of their success may be attributable to the very naiveté of their approach, which seems so striking to twentieth-century readers of anti-polygamy novels.¹⁴⁸ The legal history of women who worked within the system, of indirect political and legal agitation and effective legislative lobbying, is largely unexplored.¹⁴⁹ Anti-polygamists did not directly challenge legislators' views of themselves or their relationships with their own wives and families. Metta Victor, for example, never questioned male political authority, or claimed equal political status for women; rather, she asked legislators to recognize the rights of women in an explicitly female realm, the "national hearthstone." Only state intervention, anti-polygamists argued, could adequately protect women from an entire system that tyrannized wives. They implicated the legal system in the moral evaluation of marriage, in other words, by insisting that most marriages would not be subject to scrutiny.¹⁵⁰

Anti-polygamists appealed to what they presumed were legislators' deeply felt obligation to protect and cherish their wives as

146. For analysis of federal anti-polygamy legislation, see Gordon, "'The Twin Relic of Barbarism,'" 111-256; Lyman, *Political Deliverance*, 3-18; Larson, "Americanization" of Utah.

147. Stubborn (and routinely excommunicated) polygamous contingents survive in Salt Lake City and in rural pockets of Utah, Arizona, and Wyoming. See Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Kidnapped From That Land: Mormon Fundamentalism and the Short Creek Raid* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992). These dissidents are an embarrassment to many orthodox Mormons, but little more than a curiosity to the rest of the country, the subject of *People Magazine* articles and an occasional *New York Times* story. See, e.g., Elizabeth Joseph, "My Husband's Nine Wives," *New York Times*, 23 May 1991, sec. 5, p. 31; "Ex-Cop Royston Potter Runs Afoul of Utah Law but Not His Three Wives," *People Magazine*, (Nov. 22, 1983): 83.

148. Philip Fisher makes a similar point with regard to sentimental fiction generally—that success renders the cultural work of popular fiction trite. In other words, when the premise behind *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appears obvious (when, that is, slavery appears to be clearly immoral), it has accomplished the "most sophisticated process of social life." *Hard Facts*, 8. By making its claims obvious, Stowe's novel paradoxically also made itself obsolete. As its message settled into American society, and was incorporated into it, it disappeared. *Ibid.*, 6-9, 19-21.

149. One such reform movement, with which anti-polygamy shared some fundamental assumptions about the importance of legal protections for married women, sought greater protections for women from institutionalization. This movement is illustrated by the career of Elizabeth Packard, a woman whose husband committed her to an insane asylum. After her release, Mrs. Packard testified in front of midwestern state legislatures, arguing that women should be protected from the kinds of abuse she had suffered. Mrs. Packard was on the whole well received, and her advocacy helped promote the revision of the legal treatment of married women's property, as well as custody legislation and personal liberty laws in several states. Hendrik Hartog, "Mrs. Packard on Dependency," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 1 (1988): 85.

150. Hartog notes that his study of the career of Mrs. Packard "suggests the need for a rethinking of domestic feminism and its relationship to its supposed opponent, political feminism," a point that bears emphasis in the anti-polygamy context. *Ibid.*, 94 n.50.

autonomous beings, whose reign over the home provided their husbands with emotional, moral, and material security.¹⁵¹ Men might technically have the legal power to rule their wives with rods of iron; monogamous men were restrained by the very structure of marriage. But anti-polygamists recognized that the existence of deviant men, men like the Mormons who refused to acknowledge the sway of the sentimental moral vision, provided women with a powerful argument for a reform that could be enacted by legislators without seeming to affect their own lives.¹⁵²

The subtext, of course, was profound distrust of most (if not all) men. Anti-polygamists never argued outright that all men were nascent polygamists, although they came perilously close to such an assertion from time to time. In each of the novels, at least one male character remained constant to his wife throughout, naturally abjuring a marital system that did not respect the feelings and dignity of wives. These men, the natural protectors of women, were lionized as embodying all that was appealing, trustworthy, restrained, and manly. In the sentimental critique of polygamy, these were the ideal men, with whom authors urged eastern men to identify.¹⁵³

Congressmen could comfortably view polygamy as a gross transgression of marital vows, without having to confront unpalatable facts of potential or actual sexual transgressions at home. One could safely inveigh against polygamy—and many in Congress and the White House did—almost with impunity. Anti-polygamist authors gave legislators an issue they could embrace, for they did not have to examine their own behavior in the course of enacting legislation that effectively involved the state in marital relationships.

Of course, anti-polygamists also provided legislators with a means of distancing the rumblings of women in the East. By focusing

151. Ibid., 101. A growing literature on masculinity addresses some of the issues raised here. See, e.g., Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). For a discussion on the self-made man as the flip side of the domestic coin, see Sellers, *Market Revolution*; Ryan, "Varieties of Social Retreat: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Self-Made Man," chap. 4 in *Cradle of the Middle Class*; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

152. Hartog put it well: "It is important to note how strategically effective such a line of argument would be in lobbying legislators. They could view reformed marriage laws as necessary and good, as helping solve a 'problem' in society, and still avoid thinking about the reforms in terms of their own relationships with their own wives. Both as legislators and as husbands, they could feel confirmed in their manliness." Hartog, "Mrs. Packard on Dependency," 101 n.68.

153. In Metta Victor's novel, for example, the heroine's brother Harry remained noble and loyal throughout, despite the temptations of iniquity, wealth, and beauty: "The natural purity of his heart had not been polluted by fashionable dissipations; his keen sense of honor was such as sometimes to reflect upon the less scrupulous impulses of his brother-in-law." Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 52.

attention on Mormon Utah, monogamous marriage was insulated to some degree from attack at home. Although feminist abolitionists were a small minority, even within the abolitionist community in the late 1840's and 1850's, they were noisy, and prone to make telling arguments about the uncanny resemblance of the laws of marriage and slavery, arguments that threatened to unsettle all of society.¹⁵⁴ Polygamy gave legislators a handy counter—here was a form of marriage, they could plausibly argue, that truly replicated slavery for white women. By enacting laws to punish the enslavement of women in Utah, congressmen could direct attention away from domestic relations in their own states, and toward a rebellious territory. In this sense, Utah was indeed a handy foil.¹⁵⁵

Anti-polygamy authors in the 1850's thus championed a far more supervisory state, based on a peculiarly sentimental logic of woman's emotional nature and moral jurisdiction, all in the interests of protecting wives' power to control marital relations and the home. Wherever they saw this logic compromised—in slavery, in polygamy, in alcoholism—they campaigned for state intervention.¹⁵⁶ Moral homogeneity, not diversity, was their aspiration; legal structures founded on moral difference were thus revealed as the instruments of injustice. In other words, if moral diversity was the disease, legal diversity was a symptom, the formal structure growing out of the

154. Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 449-50, and sources cited therein.

155. For a similar argument about the defective potential of anti-slavery rhetoric, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975).

156. In addition, anti-polygamist writers of the 1850's were deeply involved in what would emerge as the moral governance movement after the Civil War. In contrast to more radical feminists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, anti-polygamist women were not engaged in a struggle for wives to be allowed to assume individual control of their own economic and political destinies. Like most sentimental thinkers, anti-polygamist authors were more at ease talking about obligations than rights; they distanced themselves early from classical laissez-faire economic and political theory. Elizabeth C. Clark, "Organized Mother Love and the Maternal State," chap. 4 in "The Politics of God and the Women's Vote" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1989). Anti-polygamist writers, like the members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), were deeply committed to the legal protections of monogamy as the only valid form of marital structure. The connection between temperance and anti-polygamy was often explicit, especially after the Civil War. Frances Willard, head of the WCTU, wrote an impassioned introduction to a compendium of anti-polygamy stories published in the early 1880's:

Who will lead us along of path of high endeavor which this thoughtful volume indicates, until the Book of Mormon is burned in the fierce blaze of Christian manhood's indignation and woman's righteous wrath, and the Gospel of Him who came not only to redeem the world but to restore to woman her lost inheritance, "the equality of equals," is the beloved Home Religion in every Home?

Frances Willard, Introduction to Froiseth, *Women of Mormonism*, xviii. Wives and mothers, in this view of family polity, were at the center of political life as well as of personal life, even if they trusted manly legislators to ensure their continued centrality. The state was transformed by this sentimental philosophy into an appendage of the family, especially in areas that involved morality and the protection of women.

fundamental failure to recognize the humanity of women. Legal diversity insulated the sinner, isolating the victim from sympathy (until the victim's story had been told, of course, to an emotionally prepared audience).

Implicit in the condemnation of moral diversity, of priestly authority, and of male violence and faithlessness, of course, was a profound critique of all husbands, and implicitly of the privacy that shielded abuse. Men, whose passion, or ambition, or greed, or selfishness led them westward, or just away from the "charmed precinct of home,"¹⁵⁷ where purity, moderation, and selflessness were enshrined in the daily tasks of housekeeping, were different only in degree from the men of Mormonism. And the isolation of Mormon women, in this light, was only the magnified version of the isolation and vulnerability all wives experienced at the "national hearthstone" they themselves helped construct. "Redress by law" in such circumstances, although more elusive than the call for government eradication of polygamy, nonetheless ran through the novels as a subtext. The claim that abuse was inevitable in polygamy, in other words, not only implied that abuse was less likely in monogamy; it also implied that all abuse was a violation of the emotional text of marriage. The consequences of such violation were profound. When wifely trust and sacrifice was met by a husband's betrayal, then trust and sacrifice were no longer appropriate. In anti-polygamy sentimentalism, husbands' abuse of power, their moral failure, absolved wives of marital obligations. Phrased sometimes in terms of "divorce," more often as sundering or separating, the consequence of failure to respect woman's emotional nature, was that wives were justified in separation—a reclamation of the self by the wife. As one woman put it upon learning of her husband's polygamy, "You have placed an insurmountable barrier between us; be it so. Henceforth we are as strangers to each other!"¹⁵⁸

This was dangerous stuff; not pro-divorce, precisely, but something more complex, perhaps in the long run more invasive (and certainly more threatening) to the power of men as husbands. If wives could decide unilaterally when to treat their husbands as "strangers," when a man had crossed the moral threshold that compromised his wife's respect, then women had arrogated to themselves the power to describe the boundaries of marriage on a case-by-case basis, even as they called simultaneously for uniform legal definition of marital structure. Here, indeed, was a recipe for women's power as wives, a

157. Victor, *Mormon Wives*, 197.

158. Belisle, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 114.

subversive potential that travelled underneath and parallel to explicit advocacy of legal reform to protect women.

The debate over whether sentimentalism was politically subversive, or acted instead as a kind of soporific, dates virtually from the rediscovery of sentimentalism's power and complexity.¹⁵⁹ Scholars have detected a "whiff of heresy" in many sentimental texts;¹⁶⁰ certainly the exploration of the pain of betrayal in anti-polygamy fiction implicitly condemned all betrayal, even as it obscured the likelihood of betrayal in monogamy. Even more to the point, anti-polygamists argued that while all husbands retained the technical power in law to rule their wives as patriarchs, the structure of monogamy, the manly restraint of men who respected the national hearthstone, dissuaded husbands from using their power.¹⁶¹ Such power was, by definition, to be held in check. Its validity, one might say, depended on its superfluity. Indeed, the equation of use with abuse implicitly challenged the existence of such power in the first place. Herein lay the subversive potential of anti-polygamy sentimentalism; the embrace of manly restraint (and womanly sacrifice) as a disabling device for husbands' power in marriage. The test for masculinity in the anti-polygamy context, as one scholar put it, required legislators "to vote against the immediate interests of their gender as an expression of a higher gender ideal."¹⁶²

The critique of male power—or rather, the deployment of the claim that true masculinity depended on a disciplined determination not to exercise raw power over dependents—was coated in anti-polygamy sentimentalism with an insulating device. For the disabling of men's power to engage in polygamy, the legislative goal of anti-polygamy protectionism, could reasonably be understood as a reinforcement of husbands' power in valid marriages. The subversion of the "dominant

159. The contours of the debate were established by Ann Douglas in *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), and Jane Tompkins in *Sensational Designs*. Douglas, who condemned sentimentalism as "obfuscatory" and "rancid," was answered by Tompkins, who maintained the "effectiveness" of stereotypicality, the "ambition" of women who wrote novels. Douglas, *Feminization*, 13; Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 12, 126. For a helpful summary of the debate, together with a critique of the oppressive functions of sentimentalism "imperialism," see Laura Wexler, "Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform," in Samuels, *Culture of Sentiment*, 9-17.

160. Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 35.

161. See John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 173-86; Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles S. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 131-53; Anthony Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 37-40.

162. Jane E. Larson, "Even a Worm Will Turn at Last: Rape Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century America" (forthcoming, *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* (Winter 1997)).

discourse of masculinity"¹⁶³ was couched in terms of an explicit appeal to male authority to control male abuses of power. The appeal itself reaffirmed both the power of men in law and the power of husbands in marriage. Legislative action, like husbands' restraint, was an act of grace, a gift of reform to women by thoughtful men—a reaffirmation of the validity of the system, rather than a fundamental reworking of it. As Eugene Genovese argued twenty years ago in his study of the slave codes in the Old South, the manipulation of the ideological tools of the master class may have given some slaves temporary refuge from individual masters, but the very act of appealing to the ethic of restraint for slaveholders drove slaves deeper into an acceptance of the logic of paternalism, if not of slavery.¹⁶⁴

Applied to anti-polygamy sentimentalism, such an analysis of the hegemony of law would label anti-polygamists' appeal to legislators' ethic of manly restraint as a flawed form of subversion at best, a kind of false consciousness, especially if the law of monogamy itself was the source of women's degradation, as the law of slavery was the source of slaves' oppression.¹⁶⁵ And yet this analysis was precisely the step anti-polygamists were not prepared to take. In their perspective, true slavery lay in the uncontrolled redefinition of marriage, in moral diversity, and in too much patriarchy, rather than in monogamy, which needed legal reinforcement to achieve stability, but which was essential to the well-being—the very emotional nature—of women.

Despite this overt equation of polygamy with slavery and of legal difference with oppression, however, the uncontrollable subtext of anti-polygamy fiction (the condemnation of polygamy as the embodiment of deceit and betrayal, of which women were the victims) contained a more dangerous kernel of critique levelled at all deceit and betrayal, and by extension, at all men. All marriages, even those "charmed precincts" protected by the law of monogamy, were painfully vulnerable; anti-polygamists condemned that vulnerability, even as they claimed that polygamy was by definition a disastrous exploitation of it. The paradoxical role of legal reform in this context as both reaffirmative of the existing order, and at the same time emblematic of the redistribution of power in marriage, belies the attempt to label anti-polygamy sentimentalism as either subversive or

163. Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Anti-Lynching Campaign (1892-94)," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 5, 22.

164. Eugene D. Genovese, "The Hegemonic Function of Law," in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 25-49.

165. For a parallel argument in literary criticism of sentimentality, see generally Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining the Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

soporific—it was both. The multi-textured message and appeal of anti-polygamy fiction allowed readers to appreciate the power of the sentimental argument for law reform, to internalize the threat, and to condemn polygamy. Such a process contained both an immediate mandate for legal action (the imposition of legal uniformity) and an implicit possibility (the condemnation of husbands' power in marriage as the source of betrayal). It was this "whiff of heresy" that added a hint of claw to the velvet glove. The dual function—both affirmative and subversive—of anti-polygamy sentimentalism is not unique to fiction; it runs throughout the American tradition of rights talk.¹⁶⁶

V. CONCLUSION

This advocacy of moral governance by the state in regulating marital structure, and by wives in regulating individual marriages, had broad appeal at mid-century. It coincided with and helped fuel expansion of national power in the Civil War era. The sentimental strategies of anti-polygamist authors in the 1850's, underlying and motivating the moral governance movement, gradually but inexorably turned into a justification for intervention in marriage by the state. Wives as rights-bearers, if not precisely as legal actors, became visible through anti-polygamy writing as never before. Their essential vulnerability, the injustice of a system that exposed the sacrifice of wives to "chance and change," as Metta Victor put it, provided the justification for a reallocation of power in this most private of all human legal relations.

The turn to state power as the most effective means of policing marital relations was conceived and nurtured during the 1850's. Legislators were quick to pick up on the political value of anti-polygamy sentimentalism. Whatever other reasons the federal government had for intervention in what the Mormons always called the internal affairs of Utah, after the outcry of women authors against plural marriage in the 1850's, anti-Mormon legislative rhetoric and statutory action were framed primarily in terms of the need to impose legal uniformity as a cure for moral diversity, to dismantle the system of legalized betrayal of wives in Utah to protect the emotional integrity of marriage.¹⁶⁷

166. Hartog made this point:

It is commonplace of critical legal studies that the law gains its moral force by appealing to widely shared utopian aspirations. In many studies, that insight merely introduces a more intensive examination of the law's repressive or hegemonic character. As a result, the utopian and destabilizing messages drawn out of law are left unexplored.

Hartog, "Constitution of Aspiration," 356 n.7 (citations omitted).

167. For a related argument about the influence of antebellum reform associations in the more interventionist post-war state, see William E. Nelson, *The Roots of American Bureaucracy*,

The use of sentimental argument, the appeal to emotional structure as the necessary complement of legal structure, was an especially welcome addition to the Republican arsenal before the Civil War. Connected inextricably in tone and content to anti-slavery political rhetoric of the late 1850's, the language of anti-polygamy polemics in Congress escalated in emotional volume, drawing on the formula outlined in anti-polygamy fiction: the sentimental condemnation of moral diversity, betrayal, and suffering. The Republican Party's "twin relics of barbarism" slogan, which drew explicitly the parallel between polygamy and slavery, virtually guaranteed southern Democrats' opposition to all anti-polygamy legislation. Before the Civil War, Southerners argued that principles of federalism prevented national imposition of legal uniformity in domestic relations, be they husband/wife or master/servant.¹⁶⁸ Representative Thomas Nelson, Republican of Tennessee, responded with a reprise of the sentimental attack on polygamy, his speech dedicated to avenging "the insult [of polygamy] to our own wives and our own daughters, and the wives and daughters of our constituents."¹⁶⁹ The duty of legislators, Nelson argued, was to enact laws that recognized

woman as the highest, last, and greatest blessing [given] to man. It was designed that she should give her whole heart in exchange for the undivided affection of man, and become his partner in lawful marriage. Enthroned in the domestic circle, she becomes our refuge amidst the storms and conflicts of life, and sheds a halo of happiness around the joys of home.¹⁷⁰

Nelson spoke in 1860, when the conflict over the other relic of barbarism was careening toward war. Shortly after the outbreak of war, the first anti-polygamy statute was enacted virtually without debate by the dominant Republican majority of the war-torn Congress. The Morrill Act, named after its primary sponsor, ardent abolitionist and anti-polygamist Justin Morrill of Vermont, criminalized the practice of polygamy in all territories. Morrill, in debates over the bill, argued that the legal imposition of monogamy would protect women from betrayal, from "change and variety," from the "caprice" of men whose lust led to the degradation of women.¹⁷¹

1830-1900 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1982).

168. For a detailed analysis of southern opposition to anti-polygamy legislation before 1861, see Gordon, "The Twin Relic of Barbarism," 113-45.

169. *Congressional Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st sess., 1860, Appendix, 194.

170. *Ibid.*

171. *Speech of Hon. Justin S. Morrill, of Vermont, on Utah Territory and Its Law—Polygamy and Its License; Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 23, 1857* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1857), 10, 13-14.

These two Republican politicians had been "trained" in the sentimental sense. They responded to the existence of polygamy in Utah as a threat to "womanhood" in the nation as a whole, as a threat to the security and happiness of wives, to the "halo of happiness around the joys of home." The logic of sentimentality, the recipe for reform that linked "national respectability to private virtue"¹⁷² and legal structure to emotional structure, provided Republican politicians with an affective instrument for anti-polygamy advocacy. Sentimentalism, in this perspective, created for and within readers a tool for connecting public law with personal virtue, for identifying the fictive suffering of plural wives in Utah with the suffering of their own wives.

The power of this logic retained much of its force even after the Civil War, resilient in the face of considerable disillusionment and doubt.¹⁷³ Despite the theory that legal action could produce meaningful moral change in Utah, Mormon resistance to anti-polygamy legislation was massive, prolonged, and articulate.¹⁷⁴ And while an investigation of the Mormon logic of resistance is beyond the scope of this Article, the reaction of anti-polygamists to resistance bears the stamp of the sentimental formula. In 1879, in *Reynolds v. United States*,¹⁷⁵ the first Supreme Court case to address the constitutionality of anti-polygamy legislation, Chief Justice Waite's opinion drew on the sentimental connection between national identity and private virtue, between law and emotion, holding that the criminal punishment of polygamy was a valid regulation of action rather than an infringement of religious belief. The degradation of women in polygamy, Waite wrote, hampered all of society, "fettering" the collective people in "stationery despotism."¹⁷⁶ Personal suffering by women, in other words, justified and explained the need for legal reformation.¹⁷⁷

172. Shirley Samuels, "Introduction," in Samuels, *Culture of Sentiment*, 4.

173. For a discussion of the attack on sentimentalism, see Korobkin, "Maintenance of Mutual Confidence," 36-44. See also George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 183-98.

174. The single most complete and detailed source for the study of Mormon resistance to the imposition of monogamy from without remains Orson F. Whitney's four-volume *History of Utah*, of which volumes two and three are devoted primarily to the theory and practice of resistance. Whitney's mother also wrote on the topic; her pamphlet is a rare defense of polygamy published by a woman. Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage*. Also useful for its reliance on hundreds of individual interviews conducted during the height of the "raid," is H.H. Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft, 1886). Secondary sources are plentiful, including Larson, "Americanization" of Utah; and Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*.

175. 98 U.S. 145 (1879).

176. *Ibid.*, 166.

177. The connections of anti-polygamy and anti-slavery sentimentalism were evident in *Reynolds*, as the language of fetters and despotism illustrates. For a fuller treatment of the contrapuntal relationship of the *Reynolds* decision and the *Dred Scott* case, see Gordon, "The

Meanwhile, novelists continued to write tales that connected the theory of women's suffering in polygamy to the emotive responses of readers, fulfilling anew the fictive blueprint for reform. And readers continued to respond, to pledge themselves to the stories. One example is particularly revealing, not only of the interaction between reader and text, but for the widening of the supposedly all-female audience for women's sentimental fiction.¹⁷⁸ On the fly-leaf of Cornelia Paddock's *The Fate of Madame LaTour*, a sentimental anti-polygamy novel published in 1881, a hand-written resolve recorded a young man's pledge to anti-polygamy politics: "Resolved—That if I ever become a statesman I will use whatever influence I have in exterminating this curse. A. Reader."¹⁷⁹

The story of the extermination of polygamy in Utah, however—the law in action as opposed to on the books—should not be understood as a neat or happy tale. By the mid- and late 1880's, the imposition of moral uniformity through law resembled all too closely the persecution of Mormons. As one scholar put it in another context, sentimentally driven reform projects often had an aggressive, even imperialistic dimension; humanitarians were not always humane.¹⁸⁰ By 1890, survival for Mormonism literally meant capitulation, the disaggregation of marriage and moral diversity. The legal landscape on which this human drama was played out had been so fundamentally altered by anti-polygamy legislation and its judicial interpretation that no viable alternative remained. Once the Mormon church president formally announced his intention not to counsel church members to violate federal law,¹⁸¹ life in Utah quickly settled into a less turbulent stream—and the Mormon church retooled, surviving, flourishing in its new accommodationist incarnation.¹⁸²

Twin Relic of Barbarism," 358-81.

178. Studies of the use of sentimental argument by lawyers in trial settings, of course, as well as the use of anti-polygamy sentimentalism by politicians, illustrates that sentimental logic had considerable appeal outside the confines of the middle-class women and Protestant clergy studied by Ann Douglas. See generally Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*. For studies of strategic sentimentalism by trial lawyers, see sources cited in notes 48 to 51 above.

179. Cornelia Paddock, *The Fate of Madame LaTour: A Tale of the Great Salt Lake* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hubert, 1881), copy in Firestone Library, Princeton University. Beneath the first statement is penned another: "I second this resolve. B. Reader."

180. Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak," 487; see also Laura Wexler, "Tender Violence," 15.

181. On the decision to comply with the overwhelming force generated by federal law, see Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 235-87; see also Henry J. Wolfinger, "A Reexamination of the Woodruff Manifesto in Light of Utah Constitutional History," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 29 (fall 1971): 329-49.

182. For descriptions of the adjustment and growth of the LDS Church in the twentieth century, see Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 243-61; Shipps, *Mormonism*, 131-50.

It is worth noting, moreover, that Mormon church leaders continued (despite protestations to the contrary) to sanction polygamous unions long after the formal disavowal of any legal right to marital diversity.¹⁸³ More importantly for most American women, the social inequities of monogamy (like those of labor relations in the post-Civil War era) became all but invisible to the American legal system, obscured in part by the very persuasiveness of the logic of the sentimentalists' attack on the inequities of polygamy.

183. For detailed analyses of polygamy after 1890, see Kenneth L. Cannon II, "Beyond the Manifesto: Polygamous Cohabitation among LDS General Authorities after 1890," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (1978): 24-36; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 206-43; Quinn, "LDS Church Authority." For an analysis of the probable understanding among Mormon leaders of precisely what the Manifesto of 1890 had committed them to, see E. Leo Lyman, "The Political Background of the Woodruff Manifesto," *Dialogue* 24 (1991): 21-39.